

A MODERN FRANCISCAN





FATHER ARSENIUS

Frontispiece

A MODERN FRANCISCAN

BEING THE LIFE OF
FATHER ARSENIUS, O.F.M.

SOMETIME GUARDIAN OF THE FRIARY, CLEVEDON; AND OF THE FRIARY,
MONTREAL; AND PROVINCIAL OF THE PROVINCE OF FRANCE; WHO DIED IN
THE ODOUR OF SANCTITY IN 1898

BY
FR. DOMINIC DEVA

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PATRI MEO

HANC VITAM SUI AMICI

FILIUS ET ADHUC VIATOR

PIE DEDICO

" SINCE in a very few days I am going to die, what need is there for me to study, to write letters, to occupy myself with business affairs? Nothing remains for me now but to prepare myself for eternity.

" At the moment of death what avail the offices we have held in life, the honours we have enjoyed, the praise, the friendship and the esteem of men? So many we have known are now dead, yet of none of them has it been said: He is happy, for he was a man of lofty intellect; he is happy, for he was a deep philosopher, a deep theologian. No, but we have said: He is happy, for he was a true and holy religious."

December 25, 1897.

(From the notes of the last Retreat of Father Arsenius.)

FOREWORD

THE following work, apart from the Introduction, is a translation, somewhat abridged and adapted, of the *Vie du Père Arsène-Marie de Servières*, by Father Norbert, O.F.M., published at Paris in 1899.

The idea of bringing out an English life of Father Arsenius was first suggested to me by my Dominican brother, Raymund. I willingly undertook the work, not only on account of the pleasure and encouragement that it gave to me personally as a member of the Order of which Father Arsenius was so bright an ornament, but also because I had come to realize how many people were deprived of the example of this holy religious, simply on account of the absence of any English biography.

My manuscript was submitted to an old confrère of Father Arsenius, and the following extract from his report may be of interest: "I have experienced real pleasure in reading over again the life of Father Arsenius, with whom I lived many years both in France and in England. He was truly such

as the author of his life describes him to the reader—a religious exemplary alike for his piety, his unremitting activity, and his mortification; very austere, very hard with himself, and yet with all this, very affable and very charitable towards others. . . . Those in particular who had the privilege of knowing him will read his life with both interest and profit."

INTRODUCTION

It is sometimes difficult to give without hesitation a reasonable answer to the question: Why should men lead austere lives? The need for some sort of mild form of mortification is easily understood, for we have on the one hand the experience of a corrupt nature requiring control and repression, and on the other the express words of our Lord: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself." The difficulty arises when we are brought face to face with examples of heroic mortification, either in the past, as in the case of the Saints, St. Francis of Assisi, or St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Theresa, or St. John of the Cross, or, even at the present day, in the austere lives of so many contemplative monks and nuns—Carthusians, Cistercians, or Poor Clares. How are we to explain the lives of such men and women as these?

I propose very briefly in this Introduction to offer some sort of explanation, and in so doing to furnish an answer to the original question.

The ascetical life, by which I mean a life of more or less continuous and severe mortification, rests upon three principles—viz., those of Purification, Expiation, and Love.

The principle of Purification is that which is at

the bottom of all mortification, however mild. "We are bound to deny ourselves," so run the familiar words of the Catechism, "because our natural inclinations are prone to evil from our very childhood; and, if not corrected by self-denial, they will certainly carry us to hell." Saints and all holy men are as essentially human as ourselves, full of innumerable weaknesses, and prone to sin. They stand in as much need as we do of being constantly on their guard against the temptations of the devil and the weakness of the flesh. "They that are Christ's"—*i.e.*, all without exception who are in earnest about their salvation—"have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences" (Gal. v. 24). The holier a man is, the more intense and strenuous are his efforts to uproot all those faults and imperfections which hinder his union with God and obstruct the workings of divine grace in his soul. In proportion to his success will be his progress in prayer—*i.e.*, his advance from the Purgative into the Illuminative and Unitive ways; and similarly the more advanced a man is in prayer, the purer will be the motives of his mortification. The two, prayer and mortification, can never be separated.

The second principle on which the ascetical life rests is that of Expiation. All true religious, all holy men and women, are by their mortified lives continually laying before the justice of God a stream of expiatory sacrifice, atoning not merely for their own sins and failings, but for the sins of the world. By the superabundance of their own sufferings and prayers they supply for the deficiencies of those innumerable souls who either will not pray and

mortify themselves at all, or who, considering their many sins and weaknesses, do not pray and mortify themselves enough. Thus Heaven is laid open to many who would never otherwise have reached it. This aspect of the religious life is well borne out by those words of St. Paul (2 Cor. iv. 10-12), where he speaks of himself as "always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake : that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh. *So then death worketh in us, but life in you*"—i.e., "our bodily mortifications are the source of your spiritual life."

Lastly, the third and highest principle on which the ascetical life is based is the principle of Love. Nothing is clearer in the lives of the Saints than that their love of suffering is simply an expression of their love for that divine Master and Model "who, having joy set before Him"—*proposito sibi gaudio*—"endured the cross, despising the shame"—*sustinuit crucem, confusione contempta* (Heb. xii. 2). They could not endure to live in ease and comfort when He—the Friend who alone had made eternal life possible for them—had chosen to walk in the ways of suffering, ignominy, and death. Apart from all thought of Heaven as the reward, of sin to be expiated, or even of souls to be saved, it is a loving desire to be likened to Christ that has prompted so many souls throughout the ages of Christianity to sacrifice literally almost everything, and, when a life of pleasure awaited them in the world, to choose in preference the poor and abject

life of the cloister. They have longed, with St. Paul, not only to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, but also *the fellowship of His sufferings*, and to be made *conformable to His death*.

This last expression, *configuratus morti ejus* (Phil. iii. 10), is perhaps one of the deepest of St. Paul's sayings. It brings out the true meaning of mortification as something calculated of its own nature and by itself to bring death ; so that when people urge the occasionally weakening effects of fasting and such-like mortifications, the answer of St. Paul would have been : " Yes, precisely, that is what mortification is meant to do : not indeed to deprive you of life, but to give you some sort of fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, and make you, in some sort, conformable to His death."

The same idea, that of reproducing in ourselves, in an infinitesimally small degree, it is true, but still reproducing something of the crucified life of Christ, besides being found in the text already noticed (2 Cor. iv. 10), occurs also in the Epistle to the Romans (viii. 29) : " Whom He (*i.e.*, God) fore-knew, He also predestinated *to be made conformable to the image of His Son* : that He might be the first-born among many brethren." By His own example Jesus Christ has become the Leader of those whom He inspires to follow after Him in the ways of prayer and mortification. Each one of them may truly say with St. Paul, " With Christ I am nailed to the cross " (Gal. ii. 19).

There is yet one thing more which may be said in connection with this subject, and it is this : There

is a real need, if the spiritual life of the Church is to be maintained, for the presence amongst us of men so far advanced and above us in the ways of the spiritual life—which means simply in the ways of prayer and mortification—as to be able to guide others and lead them forward. It does not necessarily follow that all must be as advanced as they, but it is necessary that there should be some who are proficient in and masters of the spiritual life, if others are to advance at all. A guide who does not know the whole way, or at least a considerably greater part of it, than do those whom he undertakes to guide, is useless ; so also in the spiritual life, if most directors and confessors can do little more than keep pace with those who look to them for guidance, there must at least be some who are “masters in Israel.”

* * * * *

Such a one, to a very large extent, was the Franciscan Friar, Father Arsenius, whose life is now offered to the reader. The above very brief exposition of the principles of the ascetical life will, it is hoped, make the following pages more intelligible. It is a life which seems to protest somewhat against a dangerous tendency of modern times to undervalue prayer and mortification, and to replace them by a certain restless external activity which is busy about many things, yet wholly alien to that deep interior spirit which alone forms the characteristic and the power of holy priests. Be this, however, as it may, it is certainly the life of a saintly priest and a deeply mortified religious, who

living as he did a very active life in the midst of this matter-of-fact world of ours, with which we are so familiar ourselves, gives us an example we can well appreciate and not wholly afford to neglect.

P. D. D.

CONVICT MARIANUM,

FRIBOURG,

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“Sī accedant aliqui, et dicant tibi, ne frequenter jejunes, ne imbecillior fias ; ne credas illis, neque auscultes : per istos enim inimicus hæc suggerit. . . .

“Videsne quid faciat jejunium ? . . . dæmones fugat, pravas cogitationes expellit, mentem clariorem reddit, cor mundum efficit, corpus sanctificat, denique ad thronum Dei hominem sistit. Et ne putes hæc temere dici, habes hujus rei testimonium in Evangeliiis a Salvatore prolatum. Cum enim quæsiuissent discipuli quonam modo immundi spiritus ejicerentur, respondit Dominus : Hoc genus non ejicitur nisi in *oratione et jejunio*.”

ST. ATHANASIUS : *Ad Virgines*.

“Et operui in jejunio animam meam : et factum est in opprobrium mihi.”

“Et posui vestimentum meum cilicium : et factus sum illis in parabolam.”

Ps. lxviii.

A MODERN FRANCISCAN

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS AND FRANCISCAN VOCATION, 1859-1879

THE little town of Servières (Corrèze), situated on the summit of a chain of mountains, and commanding a lovely view of steep precipices and rich pasture lands, was the birthplace of Father Arsenius or, as he was known in the world, John Beix. He was born on March 13, 1859.

His father, an excellent Catholic, was the general purveyor for the local Petit Séminaire, besides having a little land of his own which he cultivated himself. His mother was a woman of solid piety and a Tertiary of St. Francis. From their earliest years she watched carefully over the spiritual welfare of her five children. The family consisted of three boys, of whom John was the eldest, and two girls.

At the age of twelve John Beix was admitted as a pupil of the Petit Séminaire, the Bishop of Tulle's diocesan college. The building had been originally an old château, dating back to the tenth century. After eight centuries of varying fortune it came at length into the hands of M. l'Abbé Capitaine, Curé of Servières, who bought it in 1816, and converted it into its present use. At the date of John's entry it

was under the direction of M. Verniolles, perhaps the best-known of all its Superiors. He brought no little renown to the college by his many writings and his success as a teacher.

During the seven years he spent in this house John Beix received a sound classical education, and, judging from the prizes he won, his efforts were very successful. He was a hard worker, with a solid rather than brilliant intelligence, a good memory and a faculty for sound criticism. On the side of imagination he was less gifted, the practical bent of his mind making mathematics and even astronomy more congenial to him than poetry or the fine arts. Later on in life he used to be able to solve, with extraordinary ease and rapidity, the most complicated mathematical problems. He usually spent his holidays in helping the work on his father's land.

Even at this early age his piety seems to have been remarkable. He was habitually grave and serious, more so even than when he was a religious. He had a great devotion to Our Lady, and used to make excursions by night to her local sanctuary, a little chapel built in a precipitous gorge, where she is honoured under the title of Notre Dame du Roc.

"I shall be very happy," he wrote later on to his parents, "if you have Mass said from time to time at the chapel of Notre Dame du Roc. I have a great devotion to her, and often invoke her aid ; she has so often consoled me. I used to go there sometimes at night, when it was so dark I could hardly see ; yet I used to scramble across the rocks all the same, reciting the Rosary. I was always sad when I went there, and always happy when I came away."

One is reminded of St. Bernardine of Sienna, who used to escape furtively from the house where he was staying in order to pray at one of the city gates, before a certain statue of Our Lady to which he was particularly attached.

Devotion to the Holy Souls, also, was one which Father Arsenius practised, even as a boy.

"If you want anything to succeed," he once wrote to his brother Leo, "have a Mass said for the souls in Purgatory. Before I became a Franciscan I used to collect sous in order to get Masses said for these poor souls. . . . I think I owe a great deal to this devotion."

In September, 1874, a Franciscan Friar, Father Maurice, came to Servières to preach the Novena made in preparation for the Feast of Notre Dame du Roc. John Beix was very much struck by the ascetic figure of this religious. His bare feet, coarse habit and cord, his tonsured head, all made a great impression, and the resolution to become a Friar Minor was speedily taken.

Two years later another Franciscan, Father Bernard, came to preach a Triduum to the students of the Petit Séminaire in preparation for the Golden Jubilee of Pius IX. This visit only served to increase John's resolution to become a friar. He had already been received into the Third Order by the Vicar of Servières, M. l'Abbé Salagnac, on the Feast of St. Francis, 1875, and now he set himself to propagate that Order around him. By the end of the year 1877 there were already twenty Tertiaries among his fellow-students. He corre-

sponded, moreover, with the two Franciscans he had already met.

Here is a letter he wrote to Father Maurice :

"SERVIÈRES,

"October 1, 1877.

"REVEREND FATHER,

"Before speaking to you I must first make myself known to you as well as I can. To begin with, you remember Servières and the Novena you preached us. On the first evening you assembled some boys in the sacristy : you spoke to each of them, and you asked the biggest if he belonged to the college. He answered that he had been there just six years. I hope you remember him, for it was myself.

"You will wonder, perhaps, Reverend Father, why I am writing to you. I blame myself for not having done so before, because I owe you a great deal, and I wish to thank you. One morning, at the meditation, you spoke to us of the Third Order. I am very thankful, because now I am a member of it. On the next feast of our Seraphic Father St. Francis I shall already have been professed a year. I try to enlist as many others as I can.

"But there is more than this. Your example and words made a great impression upon me. I felt sure that my vocation was to be like you. I have thought a great deal about it, and now I am convinced. These holidays I have taken some steps. First I obtained the consent of my parents, and then of the Order to receive me ; all I needed were the "testimonial letters." These, unfortunately, the Bishop of Tulle has refused, and now, to crown my

misfortunes, my parents have withdrawn their consent, and I must wait till next year. Long though it is, it will only be a delay. It is you, Reverend Father, that I must thank for the great grace of my vocation."

Next year, however, only brought further delays. It was very naturally the wish both of his parents and of his Superiors that he should first of all finish his studies at the Petit Séminaire before accomplishing his purpose of becoming a Franciscan. His brothers and sisters also were most unwilling to let him go. John, however, far from allowing himself to be overcome, tried to win them over to his own way of thinking.

"Tell me frankly," he wrote to his brother Leo, April 18, 1879, "which do you think is better, to obey God or man—to save one's soul or to lose it? I think your answer will be all on my side. My dear Leo, believe me, if I thought I was deceiving myself, if I had even a shadow of doubt as to my vocation, I should put aside all my ideas, and live as others do."

And, again, in May :

"Now I must tell you and Camille that instead of crying you ought to be very happy. Nature, it is true, unites brothers together and makes the parting difficult, but is it not a great blessing for a family to have a priest among its members, and, above all, a religious? The religious prays always ; he has his arms always stretched out towards Heaven to implore

mercy. Well, that is what I shall be doing. I will pray for my relations, and a good prayer is worth more than all the treasures of the world. Come, then, take courage."

Though compelled to wait, John Beix determined to put his time to good purpose by accustoming himself to the austerities of the life he contemplated. He gave himself with greater fervour than ever to prayer and mortification, till these severities began to tell upon his health, and he was compelled by his directors to moderate them. On September 22, 1878, the Feast of the Seven Dolours of Our Lady, he took, with the permission of his confessor and of Father Bernard, a solemn vow to become a religious in the Order of Friars Minor.

In the summer of the following year he was at length enabled to accomplish his holy purpose. In July, 1879, he wrote thus to his old friend and confidant, M. l'Abbé Salagnac, Vicar of Servières, announcing his departure for the Franciscan novitiate at Pau :

"MY DEAR MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ,

"If it were not for the ties you know so well which unite me to you, I am sure you would have thought I had forgotten you. It is only in fear lest you should think those ties severed that I am constrained to show some signs of life and of gratitude for your kindness. I had a good reason for not writing to you before, and indeed that reason still remains ; but I want to show I have not forgotten you, and I hasten to do so at once, because what

has hitherto kept me back may well continue to do so for some time yet.

"I had hoped to be able to give you the good news of my admission into the Order of Friars Minor, but, as you know, these things are not settled straight off. In fact, I did not think I should be able to write to the Provincial before the end of the month of the Sacred Heart. I wrote to him on the 27th of that month, begging him to arrange about my admission, and, if all went well (as I hope it will), to send me my 'obedience' for entering the novitiate at the beginning of August. On the 4th of this month I received a reply in which the Provincial said he saw no reason why I should not be admitted to the novitiate at the beginning of August, as I had asked. . . . Provided I get my 'obedience' by the time we break up, I shall be quite satisfied. In that case I shall leave the day afterwards.

"And now it is that I want to ask of you a last favour. I intend to start early, and my last visit will be to Notre Dame du Roc. You will realize that I do not want to leave this sanctuary without hearing Mass there for the last time. This is why I want you to let me know if you will be able to offer up Mass for my intention in this sanctuary, so dear to me, and, as I know, to you also. I hope you will be able to, but tell me if you cannot, so that I may ask someone else as soon as possible, so as to make sure. . . .

"When I think of the separation, my heart aches: but may Jesus be praised and His will done! I am resolved to complete the sacrifice I began two years ago. . . . My friend Paul Veaux, who has agreed

to wait for me overnight, will accompany me to Brive. I shall stop a short time there and at Lourdes, so as to time my arrival at Pau for the evening of the 5th. An eight days' retreat will precede my reception of the habit, which is to take place on the eve of the Assumption. I shall thus be enabled to make my profession next year on the feast itself of Mary's triumphant entry into Heaven. . . .

"I have not been very well lately, and, since I was not at all anxious that my departure should be hindered by any such misfortune as this, I determined to give myself a rest. Consequently I did nothing for a fortnight, and only started work again on the 6th. My companions noticed how leisurely I went about, no longer taking the stairs two or three steps at a time as I used to. In reality I was not very strong, and am not quite all right even now, but I hope I shall be soon.

"M. Artiges has completely reset his play—'Sancho Pança, Governor of the Island of Barataria.' We are going to act it before we break up, and I am sure, if you have never laughed before, you certainly will on that day. I have never yet appeared on the stage, as you know, and now, just as I am finishing my course, I am compelled to take a part. I do not even yet know what it is going to be, but I hope it is a respectable one. I fancy that, towards the end of the piece, I shall have to lead out on to the stage the old and hoary Sancho, but I am not certain. In any case for me it is not at all a bad beginning, is it? Unhappily it will be a case of my first and last appearance combined."

Although as a religious Father Arsenius was in general very reserved, he used sometimes to open out before superiors and intimate friends upon whose judgment and discretion he could rely. A letter written by him in 1889 to a priest, with whom he was very intimately connected, gives us such interesting particulars about this period of his life, that I may be pardoned for reproducing it here :

“MY DEAR MONSIEUR L’ABBÉ,

“Your letter gave me great pleasure. It recalled to my mind a malady from which I suffered myself for two long years, and under which you are actually suffering now, for I was not able to become a religious as soon as I had made up my mind to do so. My poor parents, who were excellent Catholics, would have let me go, although it was a great sacrifice for them, but my ecclesiastical Superiors did all they could to keep me back. But the greater the obstacles, the greater were my efforts to go. I was filled with desires which I could not satisfy, but I made good use of my time by reading many different lives of our Holy Father, at least six I think. This used to encourage me, and gave me also some insight into the spirit of the Order. I became inspired with a great love of ‘Our Lady Poverty,’ whom I cherished from my heart, so that I used to wear the same suit always, and never had money in my pocket unless it was absolutely necessary. I used to write also fairly regularly to the Fathers of our Province, so you see you are not the first to be smitten.

“However, I think this will do you a lot of good.

Those who enter religion without having suffered, without having waited, without any struggle, have not the same fervent spirit. I realize now what great graces God gave me then. Meanwhile pray God to inspire you with a great love of Holy Poverty, a profound contempt for money and general well-being. I think that when I entered the Order I had already learnt these things, so earnest had been my longing; and I see now that I was under no delusion. Oh, what great graces God will give you if you are devoted to Poverty, if you enter with the firm resolution to detach yourself from everything, to go always on foot without money, begging for the few crusts which are to form your meals! I can safely give our Order this little meed of praise, without prejudice to others. No one, I think, will grudge us the hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, weariness and other trials of human nature, which we endure for the love of Jesus Christ, especially when we travel on foot. It is all very well to go about on horseback preaching and working for the salvation of souls, but Jesus Christ did not do so. To evangelize the world He made use of men who walked barefoot and dusty.

"You do well, as you say, to recommend yourself to Mary. You owe your vocation to her. She has obtained it for you; she it is who will preserve it, who will make you understand it, and will give you strength to live up to the Gospel of her Son. *Regula et vita Fratrum Minorum hæc est, scilicet: Domini nostri Jesu Christi sanctum Evangelium observare.* Yes, I feel sure you will not be happy till you have put on our rough habit, God is giving you

a great grace by making you realize that the world is not to be your home, and by allowing you no rest there.

"I remember I myself at first promised God to live in the world like the Curé d'Ars, to do great penances and never to keep a penny from one day to another; and all this simply to get out of the sacrifice He was asking from me since I was nine. I used to tell myself that secular priests needed examples of detachment and penance and zeal. But there was no use in trying to resist God. In spite of all my excellent resolutions He was not satisfied, so true is it that nothing is good for us except what He wills. I kept up the struggle, though no one suspected it, till one night I was so overcome that I began to cry, and I could not fall asleep till I had bowed myself under the all-constraining will of God, saying: 'As you wish it to be then, I shall become a Franciscan.' I fell asleep after that and thought no more of keeping up the struggle nor of wishing to become a Curé d'Ars.

"Pray that I may be true to my vocation. I shall pray that you may be also. Let us both be imitators of Jesus Christ.

"I have spoken too much of my early difficulties, but it was to make you see you are not the first to struggle."

At length the moment of separation, longed for, yet at the same time so dreaded, drew near. On Wednesday, July 30, the Petit Séminaire broke up for the summer, but as yet John had received no "obedience" as he had expected. Thursday

brought nothing. On Friday he heard Mass for the last time in the little sanctuary of Notre Dame du Roc, the Procurator of the college saying it in the unavoidable absence of M. l'Abbé Salagnac. Saturday passed, and still no word came from the Provincial. "Then," as he wrote later to his friend l'Abbé Salagnac, "I decided to leave on Sunday whether I received a letter or not." This in fact he did. On Sunday, August 3, 1879, being then twenty years of age, he bade a last farewell to his dear home of Servières, and took the road by Argentat to Tulle, whence he intended to proceed by train.

CHAPTER II

THE NOVITIATE AND THE EXPULSIONS, 1879-1880

IN his impatience to put on the garb of poverty, John Beix had, as we have seen, left his family and his home at Servières without having received his "obedience" from the Provincial. This only reached him when he arrived at the convent of St. Anthony at Brive. During the few hours he spent here he did not neglect to pray fervently to its great Franciscan patron, imploring him to bless his vocation and his already well-defined resolution of becoming "a holy religious." He then started by train for the novitiate of the Friars Minor at Pau. He arrived on Tuesday evening, August 5, 1879, and was clothed in the Franciscan habit on the 14th of the same month, the vigil of the Feast of the Assumption.*

In the following letter addressed to his parents, he tells us the details of his journey and clothing, and also his first impressions :

"PAU,

" *August 21, 1879.*

" MY DEAR PARENTS,

" May the Lord give you His peace. All my letters will commence with these words which

* In his humility he asked to be admitted as a lay-brother, but this was refused.

Our Saviour revealed to St. Francis. Our Holy Father used them as a salutation, in accordance with the injunction of Our Lord, and we do likewise in imitation of him.

“I want to tell you in this letter some of the details of my journey and of my reception of the habit in the Order of St. Francis.

“I stopped at Argentat from four in the afternoon till one o'clock the next morning. I took the train at Tulle at five o'clock on the Monday morning (August 4), arriving at Brive about seven. I left the same day at one and reached Toulouse at eight o'clock that evening. Here I found there was a train leaving for Lourdes at midnight, which I decided to take. Meanwhile, being very hungry, I walked out of the town and made a quiet meal in the open on some bread, meat, and wine with which the good Father Bernard had fortified me. Being quite alone, and night coming on, I determined to rest a little. Unfortunately I forgot both how tired I was, not having had a wink of sleep the previous night, and also that I was due to leave at midnight. You can guess what happened ; I fell asleep. When I awoke I hurried to the station, but it was too late. The train had just gone five minutes before, and I had to wait till six in the morning.

“I arrived at Lourdes about midday, and, though I had not long to stop, I did not forget any of those who have a claim on my prayers or who have asked me to pray for them to Our Blessed Lady. For you above all, my dear parents, did I ask abundant blessings. Having done the business with which I had been entrusted, I left Lourdes at half-past four.

By six o'clock I was in the Franciscan convent. On my lips were the words of the Psalmist: 'Behold the place of my rest unto the end of time; I will dwell here because my heart has chosen it.' I presented the letter of admission, together with the 'obedience' which I had received at Brive, to the Guardian, or, if you like, Superior, of the monastery, the Rev. Father Archangel, who received me with great kindness. When I arrived, the novices were out walking, but they knew I was coming that day, as one of them, to whom I had written, had of course told the others. When they came in they all rushed towards me and gave me the 'pax,' for here we all regard ourselves as brothers, and that is why we are so happy. From that moment I followed all the exercises of the Community, except the night Office, at which I have only assisted since Monday the 11th. On the evening of the day of my arrival, the life of St. Arsenius was being read in the refectory. After having been tutor to the sons of a great Roman Emperor, he retired into the desert, where he led a life of admirable mortification and holiness. The coincidence of my arrival and the reading of the life of this holy solitary led to my being called Arsenius; this is my name in religion. On the following day ten other postulants arrived, and on Friday we began the Retreat.

"On the 14th took place the ceremony of the clothing. I shall try to describe it. During Mass we all knelt in the Sanctuary, a lighted candle in front of each. The habit lay in front of us with the sleeves spread out in the form of a cross. On the habit was placed the cord and great Franciscan

rosary, and the capuche formed the head of the cross. We all went to Communion. After Mass, at a given signal, we prostrated, lying on the habit with our arms stretched out in the form of a cross. We remained in this position four or five minutes like corpses; and for us it was indeed a dying to the world.

“My dear parents, at that moment I made to my Saviour Jesus, from the depth of my heart, the promise to die completely to the world, and to live henceforth only for Him. After all, seeing the graces I have received from Him, it is only right I should give myself to Him, body and soul.

“When we stood up, the Celebrant addressed us with the words: ‘Brethren, what do you ask for?’ One of the postulants (myself) replied, in the name of all, that we desired to be clothed in the habit of St. Francis, or words to this effect. The Novice-master then proceeded to deliver a beautiful and touching exhortation. When this was finished, one after another we all went to the foot of the Altar, where we were clothed with the habit of Holy Poverty. This almost concluded the ceremony. The ‘Veni Creator’ was sung, during which we gave the ‘pax’ to all the Fathers and Brothers. Finally, each one was given his religious name. I have told you mine. We then left the church and went straight to our cells, where we took off our secular clothes, and put on the complete religious habit. Then they gave us all the big Franciscan and monastic tonsure.

“Behold me then, my dearest parents, clothed in the habit of St. Francis: sandals on my feet, my dress a long coarse habit; underneath, a tunic of the

same stuff and thickness ; for girdle, a cord ; on the left-hand side a big rosary of seven decades ; on my head a hood.

“Such a dress I much prefer to one of silk and gold. Now you have no longer to trouble about me. Almighty God, for Whom I have exchanged the things of this world, will provide abundantly for all my needs. Oh, if you only knew how happy I am ! Really, without exaggeration, I seem to be in Paradise. Certainly, religious life is a blessing which God does not make known to all, for, if all knew of it, nobody would remain in the world. I beg you, then, to dry your tears and to be happy because I am happy. I know how you have always laboured for my welfare ; you have often told me so. Well, that is now achieved. Rejoice, then, because God has deigned to turn his eyes towards your family, and to take one of your children to be trained up in the holy state of perfection. Do not weep, dear mother ; offer a generous sacrifice to God, and He will bless you. Rejoice, dear father, at having given one of your sons to God. He will repay you a hundredfold. Rejoice, my brothers and sisters, in the example God has given you. And you, dear aunt, pray Almighty God to give me strength and courage to correspond to the grace of my religious vocation. On my part, I pray, and always will pray, for you all, that Jesus may bless your work and save your souls.

“My health is already restored, and I promise not to be imprudent again—in fact, if I did not take enough to eat I should soon be compelled to. Do not worry if I do not write to you often ; it will be a

sign that everything is going well. If I was ill I should either write myself or get someone else to. Do not worry either about your letters to me, but just give me news of your health, tell me how your affairs are going, or how far advanced your work is—in a word, all the little things as well as the great.

“Well, my dear parents, I have waited a little before sending off this letter, as I wanted to make it a long one, and I think I have succeeded. I ought to tell you that time here is not at our disposal, and, in proof of this, it will be enough to say that I have taken six days to write this letter. . . .

“My compliments to all who ask news of me. Remember, I do not want to forget any of my friends. Tell my friend, Sister St. Victor, that I have the same work to do here as she has—viz., to take care of the altar and the sacred ornaments and the sanctuary lamp. Every morning also I do the work of the good F——. I sweep, carry water, and twice a week I wash the dishes.

Lastly, my best wishes to all our neighbours. If there are still any I forget, let them impute it to my wretched memory, and not to ill-will.

“I conclude, my dearest parents, in embracing you all most affectionately in the Sacred Heart of our good Saviour Jesus, in Whom I am ever your most devoted son,

“FR. ARSENIUS.”

There is seldom much to chronicle in the lives of novices. Day follows day, and week follows week, in what is essentially a hidden life. Under the direction of his Novice-master, a man well fitted for

this difficult and most responsible position, Father Arsenius made rapid progress in virtue, and soon became a model religious. He was, above all, a man of prayer and mortification, of a deep interior life, forgetful of himself, and full of charity for his brethren. Shortly after his arrival the Guardian remarked to the Novice-master, "How well he behaves! one would take him for a tried religious, although he has but just arrived."

The following account by a fellow-novice may be of interest :

"Father Arsenius, even from his novitiate days, seemed to have attained the gravity and fervour of an old religious. But this spirit of his was really genuine, for it was never repulsive to anyone, and never went to excess. In spite of his severe look, he was affable with everybody, and we always felt at ease with him. There was nothing at all affected about him. Without ever troubling about what was going on around him, he unconsciously gave edification to all.

"Though his aspect and words were grave, he was gay nevertheless. Nothing was more delightful than to see the gravity of a recluse give place suddenly to a burst of laughter. . . . This tendency to laugh, even at inopportune times, often proved too strong for him. In later life it was as noticeable as ever. Thus, even when engaged in the most serious occupations as Guardian or Provincial, a word would often suffice to set him laughing.

"He had great patience, and I remember once, when doing his tonsure at the novitiate, giving him

a good opportunity of exercising it. Our razors, as you know, were not always perfect, and the scissors, if anything even less so. I was operating as well as I could under the circumstances, when, by a sudden jerk, I gave him a great gash in the neck. I shiver to think of it even now. The blood, of course, poured out, but Arsenius did not seem to mind at all. He simply asked me to finish his tonsure."

The great trial of the novitiate, Father Arsenius used to say, was the absence of trial. He who had such high ideals of the religious life looked for great austerity and humiliations. He was almost disillusioned. Nevertheless the trials, such as they are, are generally severe enough to discourage those whose hearts are not generous and constant.

He prayed often for all the intentions recommended to the Community, and especially that God in His mercy would raise up many vocations to the Franciscan life. Here is a letter he wrote from the novitiate to a friend he had left in the world :

"MY DEAR MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ,

"Forgive me, I beg you, for not having answered your letter at once. I was delighted to receive it.

"Since I have not much time, and cannot say everything I want to, I pass without further introduction to what interests me most. You said to me, 'Pray hard that Almighty God may break my chains and that I may come and join you as soon as possible.' But you forget, I think, that God will not break those chains by Himself. You on your side

must pull and pull hard, and I shall come too and seize the end of this terrible chain and pull also as hard as I can. Moreover, since you cannot live without being attached to something, I shall pray our Seraphic Father to prepare for you a strong cord, which you will not be able to break, and to add besides a thick habit and a pair of old sandals. Will this suit you? If so, come quickly, if only out of compassion for me.

“I will explain. According to the Rule we take the discipline three times a week. Every Thursday, however, we take it a fourth time out of devotion. Naturally the intention we then have is that God may send many Fathers and Brothers to the novitiate. Please note then that every Thursday I take the discipline for you, and though I have not yet succeeded in drawing blood, still I give myself some good little stripes. Now, as you will readily understand, I have no anxiety to torment myself for you, all through my novitiate. This is why I have arranged that, after receiving my letter you must be with us by May. You will come to Lourdes with my mother, and thence to Pau, where you are to stop. Come then, I count on you for May.

“You have read how our Seraphic Father, having met a knight, said to him: ‘You have borne those arms long enough, I shall give you others.’ Permit me similarly to tell you that you have exercised your ministry long enough; leave this poor world, which is making your chain thicker every minute, and come to be a Franciscan. You will find we are all brothers here, though gathered from the four corners of Europe. We have Italians, Spaniards,

and Germans; others from Luxembourg, Savoy, Alsace; others from Flanders and Picardy; a few little ones from Corrèze, and a place for you. . . .

"I am yours devotedly in the hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

"FR. A."

At the beginning of the year 1880 France was being deeply agitated by certain political schemes then before the Chamber and Senate. The Government was in the hands of unscrupulous persons who were filled with hatred against religious and priests, and who proposed to stifle the religious Orders by insisting on a form of approbation which they could not possibly accept. The refusal was to entail expulsion. Without exception the religious Superiors refused to allow themselves to be thus enslaved by the State, and in consequence the decrees of expulsion were passed on March 29, 1880. On both sides feeling was running very high.

Such events as these naturally penetrated even to the novices at Pau. They were told, however, not to trouble at all about them, as everything would be arranged for them according as circumstances might demand. Father Arsenius was not, in any case, the man to trouble much over the vagaries of the French Government, but at this time an event of far deeper interest to himself was engaging all his attention. For him, as for every novice, the important question centred round his religious profession. He tried to appreciate what the act of profession really means, and the more he understood this, the more earnest were his efforts to prepare himself well.

He wrote on June 27, 1880:

"MY DEAR PARENTS,"

"Each time I write to you I tell you I pray for you very much. Now it is my turn to ask your prayers. The moment of my religious profession is drawing near, and it is not for a day nor for ten years that one gives oneself to God, but for ever. It is necessary then that my sacrifice should be complete; but it is also your sacrifice, and so, the more perfect it is, the more merit will you have. Pray then and get prayers said that I may become a good religious and a saint. I shall be very pleased if you will make a novena to Our Lady during the nine days preceding the Feast of the Assumption (August 15). But you will have done *everything* I want if, besides, you have two Masses said on the eve of that day, one in the parish church for our dead, the other at Notre Dame, for my intentions and those of my companions who are to make profession with me.

"As for the decrees of the Government against religious, do not worry about them any more than I do. I assure you I hardly think of them at all. Here we are so liked that the people would be ready to defend us, if we asked them, rather than let us go. Supposing it is necessary to leave France, our brethren in Spain have a house ready for us, where they will receive us with open arms, so don't be afraid. I will let you know if we leave."

Two days after this letter was written the Jesuits were the first to be honoured by persecution and expulsion. A month later their Fathers at Pau, already driven out of their house, came to the

Franciscan convent to celebrate the feast of their founder, St. Ignatius. The storm was not long in falling on the other congregations.

In spite of all, however, the Profession of the novices at Pau was decided on and fixed for August 15, the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady. On that day Father Arsenius, with six companions, made his profession of Simple vows, thus giving himself entirely to God and St. Francis. He was then twenty-one years of age.

On the 17th he left for Béziers in order to begin his course of Philosophy. On his way he paid another visit to Lourdes, and placed his religious life once more under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. The Franciscan students at Béziers were numerous and promising, with a capital professor at their head. Father Arsenius was one of the best, for his steady and persevering nature was just fitted to tackle the knotty points in Philosophy, and afterwards in Theology, though, in these more abstruse studies, his memory served him less well than it had done at school. Assiduous labour, however, made up for this deficiency.

Béziers possessed many excellent Catholics, but there were unfortunately at this time many also who were very ill-disposed towards religion. The decrees of expulsion had been passed since March 29, but the Government hesitated to put them into execution immediately. They felt themselves opposed by all that was best in the nation, and were compelled to feel their way slowly so as not to endanger the anticipated profits of their injustice. At Béziers, however, the scum of the populace was

noisy and impatient. As early as June 29 a big crowd, led on by revolutionary agitators, assembled round the Franciscan convent, bawling the "Marseillaise," and shouting for the expulsion and even for the death of the religious. This was repeated on the following day. On July 1, however, the proceedings were far more violent. At eight o'clock in the evening, a crowd of more than 2,000 people surrounded the convent and broke the windows, shouting and blaspheming. The railings and the Cross over the doorway were broken, the iron bolts of the big wooden door were bent back and the lock forced. A wretched youth hoisted the tricolor flag on to the Cross which formed part of the Calvary in the hall of the convent. Then, to make his act more sacrilegious, he struck the figure of Christ, whilst his own mother urged him on crying, "Strike on, He is not weeping yet." Most of the religious were compelled to leave the house; only two remained. Just at the moment when the wild mob was on the point of penetrating into the cloisters, the police arrived on the scene, accompanied by some soldiers both mounted and on foot. These swept everything before them, driving away the crowds who, like birds of prey, had gathered around the house: but it was not till towards midnight that this dangerous manifestation of passion had quieted down.

For some time after this outburst there was comparative peace. The newly professed students from Pau arrived at Béziers, as we have seen, on August 17. Just two months later the end came. On October 16, at half-past five in the morning, just

as the students were in the act of receiving Holy Communion at the foot of the altar, a cry suddenly rang out through the church: "Here they are! here they are! shut the doors!" The congregation immediately hurried out, the religious left the choir, and the doors were closed just in time. The Commissary of Police had indeed arrived attended by his men and some locksmiths.

Having forced open the door leading into the house, these found themselves in that part of the building allotted to the students in Philosophy, all of them young men and fifteen in number. It had originally been suggested to allow these to go out before the police entered in order to save them from having their rooms broken open and from being themselves forcibly ejected, but they all implored to be allowed to remain. They barricaded one door so strongly that the locksmiths were hard put to it to effect an entry. At length they succeeded, but only to find themselves, to their dismay, confronted with another equally difficult to open, and so on through several rooms and corridors. To the summons of the Commissary of Police each of the young religious replied that obedience forbade him to leave his cell. They were all seized and led outside the door of the church.

A generous Catholic now came to the rescue of these homeless religious. Monsieur le Vicomte de Cassagne offered a temporary refuge to the students in his Château de la Jourdané near Béziers. A large room near the chapel happened to be vacant, and there they were provisionally installed.

The decrees had not as yet touched the other

houses, so the Superiors decided to send back to Pau the students who had been driven from Béziers. They arrived at the convent about midnight on October 23, dressed in the secular clothes they had been compelled to put on for the journey. The devoted and zealous men from the town who watched day and night in the convent at Pau to forestall any surprise visit on the part of the police, at first refused the new-comers admission. The lateness of the hour and the youthful and muscular appearance of these apparent laymen in secular garb naturally made those on guard suspect some trick. Only after some time were the students recognized and admitted. In order, however, not to awaken suspicions and to avoid all prominence the new-comers were kept hidden in the convent from public view.

One is tempted nowadays to smile at these precautions, but at the time men's minds were exceedingly anxious, and the gloomiest forebodings were abroad. It was feared that the expulsion of the religious was to be but the prelude to a far more widespread persecution.

The convent at Pau was not to be left long in peace. On November 6 the Commissary of Police arrived and proceeded to put into execution the infamous decrees of expulsion. The townspeople of Pau have always been devoted to the Franciscans. They assembled in large numbers round the house, and, as the religious came out, greeted them with enthusiastic cheering. Women strewed flowers before them, and the workmen of the quarter pressed round to kiss their hands. It was a regular

triumphal procession. From all sides resounded cries of "Vivent les Franciscains! à bas les décrets! Vive la liberté! Vive la France!" When at length the friendly doors of the Maison Marianne were reached, the shouts redoubled; then in silence the crowds knelt down for the blessing of one of the Fathers.

Shortly afterwards the students, among whom of course was Father Arsenius, drove off in carriages to the Château d'Idron, outside the town where the Count and Countess de Beaumont were awaiting them.

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CHAPTER III

STUDENT AND YOUNG PRIEST, 1880-1888

AFTER the expulsion, the novices who had been at Pau, enjoyed for four months the hospitality of M. le Comte Goubaux at Betterette. Then, in March, 1881, they left for Taunton in England. The students in Theology from Bourges went to Weert in Holland. The students in Philosophy, as we have seen, found a home in the Château d'Idron. For nearly a year, from November, 1880, to July, 1881, they remained here, the welcome guests of the Count and Countess de Beaumont, who looked after them with the most devoted attention, giving up to them almost their entire house.

We get some details of religious life in a château from the following letter which Father Arsenius wrote to his parents on Christmas Day :

“ MY DEAR PARENTS,

“ Pray and get prayers said for me and all of us Franciscans that God may keep us fervent in spite of worldly influences. Here we are extremely well off, but others are not so fortunate. There are not many families who understand the ways of religious so well as the one which has received us. We have a chapel in the house where the Blessed

Sacrament is reserved ; we say the Office in choir just as usual, except for the midnight Office. This we say now in the evening so as not to inconvenience the family. We have study, silence, discipline, and the usual penitential exercises ; we pray even more than usual. The only thing we have to complain of is the abundance and the excellence of the food. Surely now this is enough to make you feel easy about me if you have been anxious. I can think of nothing to add to it.

“ We are going to stop here till the Government turns us out. Then we shall probably go to England, where we shall be safer than anywhere else. You must not be upset if I do not write as often as usual. It will be a good sign if I don't. I shall let you know if anything special happens. As for New Year's presents, you know I am very fond of Masses. Arrange among yourselves so as to have one said at Notre-Dame, and another at the parish church, for our beloved dead. It will be a New Year's gift for them also, and they will be as pleased as I.

“ Let us serve God well ; it is all we have to do in this world. I embrace you all, etc.”

One day when the students were all together on a hill which overlooks the house and commands a magnificent view of the Pyrenees, one of their number, unsettled by his recent experiences and a prey to sadness, told his companions of his intention to leave the Order and return to the world. On hearing this Father Arsenius immediately threw himself at his feet and implored him with tears not to yield to the temptation.

This earnest and whole-hearted spirit of his comes out again clearly in a letter written from the Château d'Idron in May, 1881 :

“MY DEAR PARENTS,

“I meant to wait till I had gone to Spain before answering your letter, so as to avoid having to write two. I am astonished you can worry so much about so insignificant a person as I am, because I have not written. Ah, my dear parents, serve God above all ; we have done enough for the world, it is time to look to Heaven. Each step we take brings us nearer eternity. This is what we must think about. To-morrow we die ; after death, the judgment, and on that judgment depends our eternal happiness or misery. Let us make sure of a happy sentence while there is yet time. As long as we live we are under the reign of mercy, but as soon as we cease to live, we are under the reign of justice.

“My dear parents, I suppose you think I am forgetting you. Undeceive yourselves. I spend my time well for you. Every day and many times a day I send up prayers for you to God, imploring Him to reserve a merciful judgment for you, and to keep a beautiful place for you in Heaven. You will realize after death how many hundreds of letters I have written for you.

“Moreover, may I not tell you how, when I left the world and entered the cloister, I meant to live there as a true religious ? I am sure you would be ready yourselves to blame me if I had gone so far away from you only to live as a sort of half-religious.

Forgive me, I beg you, if I try to live up to my obligations. I dislike writing letters, still more do I dislike receiving them; I have no wish for such troubles as these. I belong now wholly to God. He has given Himself to me, and I have given myself to Him. Would you have me forswear myself? No, that must never be. I must be wholly His. Moreover, so that you may be quite happy about me, I have told you I shall write if anything special happens. When I do not write, it is a sign that everything is going well. Do the same, and let us trust wholly in God.

"I told you in my last letter that we were probably going to England. Since then Providence has disposed otherwise, and a house in Spain, in Seville, has been got ready for us. We shall be going there shortly.

"Adieu, my dear parents. I leave you to the care of the Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in whom I embrace you, etc."

The sojourn at the Château d'Idron could not in fact go on indefinitely in spite of the inexhaustible charity of the Count. It was necessary to find some foreign convent as a permanent residence. At first England was thought of, but the idea was given up when it was found possible to send the students to a fine old convent of the Order called Our Lady of Loreto, near Seville. They left the hospitable roof of the Château d'Idron on June 21, 1881.

Before separating, the Count de Beaumont wished to have a photograph of the Community nineteen in

all. It was taken on the steps of the château. Father Arsenius is the last on the top step, his hands in his sleeves and his eyes cast down, exteriorly what he was interiorly also—viz., a religious, dead to the world.

Seville and the convent of Loreto were reached on June 25. On July 2 the house was canonically established. The whole country-side was *en fête* for the occasion. The inhabitants of the five little villages in the neighbourhood hastened in crowds to the convent. With great enthusiasm and transports of delight these Spanish peasants welcomed back the friars into their midst. They invaded the house, kissing the hands and habits of the religious. In the evening Monsignor Spinola, delegated for the purpose by the Cardinal Archbishop of Seville, pronounced the official form of enclosure for the convent.

Then was set up anew the regular round of religious daily life, with its solitude, its austerities, and yet at the same time its holiest of joys, after nine months of what must inevitably have been largely a comfortable home-life. The convent of Loreto was admirably suited for the monastic life. Exteriorly it was situated far from the turmoil of the world; interiorly it was fragrant with the memories and the traditions of holy men. Apart from some of merely local fame, Loreto had for several years been the home of St. Francis Solano, the apostle of South America, and it was here he died. His cell, since converted into a chapel, was a favourite place of prayer for Father Arsenius, and the penitential spirit of that great Franciscan saint

became in some sort his own. His director was compelled at this time to moderate his inclination for penance, lest he should injure his health.

For nearly two years Father Arsenius dwelt in this house finishing here his second year of Philosophy and commencing his first of Theology, and, what in his eyes was of far greater importance, striving to sanctify himself more and more by self-sacrifice, penance, and prayer. The solitude of the place especially appealed to him :

"Here in Loreto," he wrote in December, 1882, "we are far from the noise of the world, and have little news of it. Our dear convent is all alone in a country planted with olive-trees. But because we are solitary, this does not mean we are any the less happy on that account. Oh, if men only knew the joys they experience who serve God in solitude away from the world !"

There was only one disturbing element in this peaceful home, but it was unfortunately a serious one. The health of the community left much to be desired. The Guardian, Father Jean-Marie de Quillan, died on March 25, 1882. Then the Instructor of the students, Father Antonine, and several of the students themselves fell seriously ill with fever. Father Arsenius, with whom the climate seems to have agreed, was appointed Infirmarian, an office he continued to fulfil with admirable charity till he was put *hors de combat* himself by the fall of a ladder in the church.

The advent of several Spanish novices who joined the Order at this time gave hopes of the speedy

re-establishment of the Spanish Provinces. In view, therefore, of the ill-health of the French religious, and of the accession to the Order of Spaniards, it was decided to hand over the convent of Loreto to the Spanish religious to form the basis for a new Province. The hopes then entertained have been abundantly realized, and the Province of which Loreto was the first foundation now contains some one hundred and sixty religious, with nine houses. The French students were sent to join those already settled in England at Clevedon. So on April 4, 1883, they said farewell to their brethren, and left the convent of Loreto, singing as they did so the *Ave Maris Stella*. They embarked at Huelva on board the *Lindsay*, and after seven days landed in England. By the 14th they were at Clevedon.

Family affairs necessitating his presence at Servières, Father Arsenius made the journey by land. In passing through Avila he had the happiness of visiting St. Teresa's convent there, and of speaking with the nuns. They showed him the tambourine on which the saint used to play at Christmas time before the Crib. Before the end of April he had rejoined his brethren in Clevedon, and here it was that, whilst pursuing his studies, he prepared himself for the priesthood.

The first establishment in England of the French Franciscans was at Taunton, where they settled near the convent of Franciscan nuns. From Taunton they went to Bristol, and thence to Clevedon, a charming little seaside town in Somersetshire. By 1883 all the students of the French

Province of St. Louis were together here. The Community was numerous and fervent. The following letter (August 1, 1883) which Father Arsenius wrote to his parents from Clevedon gives some interesting details :

“The Fathers preach three times on Sundays and several times also during the week. The Protestants come in great numbers to hear them, and also to the Benedictions, which we have very frequently. What draws them is our singing. The English love music, so we try to win them by it. Every day during recreation they come in crowds to look at us, and are astonished to see such people. They cannot understand how we can live in chastity, or why we fast and take the discipline and do so much penance. They say also, when speaking of our sermons, that we preach better than their ministers do, and ‘what is more surprising still’ they say ‘these monks practise what they preach.’ During our recreation, whilst they stand looking at us, some of them try to make objections against the Catholic Faith ; but they seldom do so a second time, for the Fathers answer them back so well, that all the others start laughing at them. Some of them say that Our Lord only instituted Baptism and not any of the other Sacraments ; some say that all men are priests, others that there are none at all. They deny the Real Presence, say that Confession is an invention of Catholics, that the Pope is not Vicar of Christ, and so on. Some of them even say that they are the true Catholics, and that we are only heretics.

“At the beginning they circulated all sorts of calumnies against us. They thought we seized Protestant children to kill them—so much so that the poor little things were afraid to come near the place, or if they had to, were so frightened that they trembled all over, and hurried away as soon as possible, looking anxiously round to see if anyone was coming out to catch them. They said also that we had got several barrels of gunpowder to destroy the country and blow up the Protestant churches. One day when several cases of books arrived at the convent, everybody made sure they were the famous barrels of gunpowder, and several policemen came to make a searching inquiry. But when they only found books, they were soon undeceived. They couldn't believe either that we had no wives, and they used to say these were coming over soon to join us ; but they have given this up now. As they get to know us, they find out their misconceptions, so that there is quite a big movement in Clevedon towards Catholicism. Some have been already received, others are under instruction, several say they want to become Catholics. You must pray that God will enlighten them.

“One good lady, seeing we are so good, is most distressed at our being Catholics. She has undertaken to convert the whole Community, and comes from time to time to preach the ‘true Gospel’ to one of the Fathers, who is to be instrumental in the conversion of the others. She asks him why, since her religion is so easy, he does not prefer it to our own, which is so difficult ; for Protestants say in fact that good works are not necessary, but that faith alone is enough.

“According to them, one can sin as much as one likes, provided one believes in God’s pardon, that only being necessary for salvation. The poor soul comes then to preach her gospel, but since she finds that the Father grows more and more hardened and each time resists the grace of her preaching, she always ends up by saying she will pray to the Holy Spirit to enlighten us. Pray that she may receive light herself.”

In another letter, dated Clevedon, October 10, 1883, Father Arsenius adds a few further details :

“Pray hard that the Protestants may be converted. Since my last letter at least thirteen have been converted at Clevedon.

“I was Infirmarian in Spain, and I have just been appointed to the same office here ; but I don’t think I shall have as much to do as in Spain, for, thanks be to God, it is seldom any of us are ill.

“At first we could not go outside in the habit ; but now by going out from time to time we have accustomed the people to it, so that we can wear it always now whenever we have to go out. It is delightful not to have to take it off as we had to before.”

On May 19, 1883, Father Arsenius received Minor Orders at Clevedon at the hands of Monsignor Clifford, Bishop of Clifton. He had already received the tonsure two years previously at Loreto, in Spain. Another important event in his life which occurred at this time was his Solemn Profession. As usual, his own letters home best reveal

his feelings and aspirations. On August 1, 1883, he wrote as follows to his parents :

“MY DEAR PARENTS,

“I am preparing to make my Profession of Solemn vows on the 15th, the Feast of the Assumption. I have already renounced the world by my Profession of Simple vows, three years ago, but there is still another step to take, because up till now I could, though with difficulty, have gone back on my word.* Now I am going to take the last step by binding myself irrevocably to God in the Order of Friars Minor. . . . I want to offer to God the complete sacrifice of myself, to give Him without reserve and for ever my heart and soul with all their powers, my body and my entire life. I want to acquire such a spirit of generosity that I may be able to accept every sacrifice and be ready every instant to immolate myself before God, forgetting everything that is not for His interests and for His greater glory.”

The ceremony of Profession was, however, put off till September 8, the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, when the Commissary Provincial received the Solemn vows of five students. On this occasion Father Arsenius obtained permission to add the

* This is not strictly correct. Simple Profession, being a profession of perpetual vows, binds the *subject* as irrevocably as does Solemn Profession, so that he is not free to go back on his word. If, for grave reasons, it is possible to be dispensed from Simple vows, this is in virtue of a right which the Church gives to the *Order* of dismissing those who have not been solemnly professed.

—TRANSLATOR.

name of Mary to his religious name. Henceforth he was officially known as Arsenius-Mary.

The peaceful course of the studies at Clevedon was only broken by the ordinations, which form such important landmarks in the lives of those preparing for the priesthood. Father Arsenius was ordained Sub-Deacon at Clevedon on December 22, 1884, and Deacon on July 12 following. By the year 1886 he had finished his theological studies, but before being ordained priest he was sent to teach in the Seraphic College at Bordeaux. He left England on January 25, and, after spending a day in Paris, reached Bordeaux on the 29th.

"You will ask why I am at Bordeaux," he writes to his family in March, "and what I am doing here? Well, I am here because I have been sent here; as to what I am doing, this will enlighten you. We have here a little school which we call a Seraphic College, where we educate those boys who show signs of a Franciscan vocation, but who have not yet done their studies. We teach them Latin, Greek, science, but above all piety and holiness. It is just like the *Petit Séminaire*, and in fact we use many of the books the Rector at *Servières* wrote himself.

"As you see, then, I am a professor: exactly what I least expected to be and didn't wish for at all. However, I did not become a Franciscan to do my own will. The merit of obedience is, I feel, very great, for in spite of the bustle of classes—two classes for two hours every day—and the distraction of a great deal of recreation, for we have to give

the boys more than we usually have ourselves, still I feel the workings of grace, and I realize that a man can become holy wherever God sends him.

"Since we are persecuted and the existence of our little school is threatened, we are obliged to put off our dear Franciscan habit and dress just like secular priests, so you can picture me as a secular with a soutane, shoes and stockings, and a tiny little tonsure.

"Although I would have much preferred to be in a regular convent, with its solitude and silence and separation from the world, still I am not anxious to get away, so you must not think I am unhappy here—far from it. I must confess I was very surprised when my Superiors, who know my love of solitude, chose me for this work, and I dreaded missing the happiness of the monastery; but the grace of God is wonderfully powerful, and it is quite a pleasure for me to have to train up these young souls in the ways of science and holiness."

Father Arsenius had, in fact, arrived at the college at a very critical time. The civil authorities were up in arms against it as being a place of secondary education recognized by the Government, but directed by religious who had not received the State authorization. It was, in consequence, necessary to adopt certain precautions, among others, as we have seen, that of putting off the religious habit and wearing the dress of secular priests.

Although his attraction for the regular and observant life of the monastery disinclined Father Arsenius for the duties of a professor, his intellectual

qualifications well fitted him for the work. At Bordeaux, as elsewhere, he was a man of duty, acquitting himself of his office with zeal and devotion. His influence for good in the school was, as may be imagined, considerable.

On one occasion he learnt that several of the students had become so discouraged that they were thinking of returning to the world. On the following morning Father Arsenius came as usual to the study hall to give the short meditation. He took up the subject of "vocation," and dwelt on the danger they run who deliberately reject the call of God. Then his voice began to tremble, and with tears in his eyes he hid his face in his hands. His emotion passed to his young audience, the tears of the students mingled with those of the master; and when, a few minutes afterwards, they went to the chapel to hear Mass, God's grace had done its work. The vocations of the doubting were strengthened, and all ideas of desertion dismissed.

The time for his ordination to the priesthood was drawing near. On April 3, 1886, he wrote home as follows:

"MY DEAR PARENTS,

"I am to be ordained priest on June 19. Now, above all, have I need of help to prepare myself for this great event. I hope you will pray for me and get prayers said. Kindly get at least one Mass said at Notre Dame du Roc on the 19th.

"The Rector has just told me to invite you all to come and assist at my ordination and first Mass. I told him I did not think you would be able to

come on account of the distance. However, if you can, or at least you two, I shall be delighted. Do try; it will be such a pleasure for me. In any case, dearest father and mother, be assured my first blessing will be for you. I will pray in my first Mass especially for you, and all my brothers and sisters, my uncles, aunts, and nephews, and all my other relatives. . . ."

At length the long expected day arrived. On June 19, 1886, Father Arsenius was ordained priest, and on the following day he said his first Mass in the chapel of the Seraphic College at Bordeaux.

After his ordination, according to the custom of the Province, Father Arsenius went to spend a few days at his home in Servières. He had the happiness of seeing again his family, the Petit Séminaire, and, above all, the sanctuary of Notre Dame du Roc, where he had once signed with his own blood his vow to enter the Order. His pious mother had the happiness of assisting at her son's Mass, and of receiving Communion from his hands. It turned out to be their last meeting.

On his way back Father Arsenius stopped a few days at Brive, wishing to make there another short retreat. When he had returned to Bordeaux he wrote the following characteristic letter home:

"BORDEAUX,
" *August 5, 1886.*

"MY DEAR PARENTS,

"I reached Bordeaux on the 3rd. When I was at Tulle, where I arrived at four o'clock in the morning, I said the Community Mass at the Car-

melites. Monsignor X—— could not come with me to the station to take my ticket, but he offered me two francs, which I could not accept. So I went to the station, trusting in Providence. When I got there I said to the Station-master that I wanted to go to Brive, but that I had no money to pay the fare. He let me travel without a ticket, which does not happen often. You see, one loses nothing by keeping one's promises to God, however absurd and imprudent it may seem."

With the graces of his ordination still fresh upon him, strengthened and enlightened by two successive retreats, Father Arsenius strove to ascertain by what ways God was calling him to fashion his life in accordance with the divine model. Should he live in solitude, devoting himself wholly to God; should he offer himself for the Foreign Missions, in the hopes of shedding his blood for the Faith? Such were the questions he asked himself. He was, however, unwilling to settle them himself, because he feared the illusions of self-love and the snares of the devil, who so often entraps those who rashly presume to aspire to a more perfect form of life. He wished to let himself be guided by obedience, that touchstone of real sanctity, and so he consulted his director, opening his mind to him completely. He wrote:

"BORDEAUX,

"August 25, 1886.

"REVEREND AND DEAR FATHER,

"I take the opportunity of some spare moments to write to you a little more fully about

what I mentioned in my last letter. I wish to lay before you completely all my thoughts, because I have confidence in you, and hope for some good advice. In your last letter you expressed a fear that I had changed my ideas and my resolutions. As I have said, I have not changed, and I hope by the grace of God and the help of His Blessed Mother to maintain myself and strengthen myself in my vocation. I assure you I have no love for the world; I detest its sensuality and what are called its honours. I detest money and riches. I love recollection and solitude. Often, since I entered the Order, I have had longings to become a Carthusian; and now, more than ever, am I ready to be one. I have often spoken to my confessors about this, for, I confess, when I went to the novitiate I was astonished. I had hoped for much more poverty, prayer, and recollection—many more austerities. What kept me, and still keeps me, in our Order is my love for holy poverty, of which our Order makes the most complete profession. As for my love of lowliness, I confess I often asked to be a lay-brother, and each time I was told it was a temptation. When I spoke to some of my Superiors about my attraction for penance, they told me it was all an illusion, and that I ought to act as others did. I have obeyed, because I know that God loves obedience better than all the sacrifices we may make of our own will; but, all the same, the attraction remains.

“As to my great desire to go on the Missions which I have had for eight or nine years, I am at a loss how to reconcile it with my love for solitude

and recollection. When I compare them, I do not know which is the more powerful, but generally I think I should choose to live out my life in solitude and penance, far from the noise of the world, intent only upon God and the salvation of my soul. But then there is something which makes me give the preference to the Missions: the sufferings I should certainly meet with; the penances I should be able to perform, or which would come of themselves without my choosing; the compassion I have for all those poor souls who are lost and are in ignorance of Our Lord Jesus Christ; above all (and this by itself would suffice to decide me) the great desire I have to witness by my own blood to Him who died for me, a deep longing to be crucified so as to be made most perfectly like to my Lord Jesus Christ. Yet in spite of all this I do not know which is my true vocation. At the slightest sign from my Superiors I should leave for the Missions with the greatest pleasure; but I shall not make up my mind myself, for fear of doing my own will and obeying simply my own desires, instead of obeying my vocation and the voice of God. In any case I should be very sorry to have to take money, for I hate it supremely. You see, dear Father, that I tell you everything quite simply. Let me know what you think.

“I was sent as professor to the Seraphic College seven months ago. Many were surprised, but I myself most of all. However, I am quite happy, because having neither sought it nor even thought about it, and finding myself here by an act of obedience, the blindest I have ever made, I feel

assured I am doing the will of God, and that is all I care about. . . ."

Father Arsenius continued to devote himself to the work of the Seraphic College at Bordeaux. Even during the summer holidays of 1886, after his return from Servières, he carried on his classes, of which he had now three, because the students were anxious to go to the novitiate as soon as possible. After the days of trial the school prospered exceedingly, numbering from fifty to sixty boys.

Meanwhile in England great progress continued to be made. Clevedon had been founded in 1882. Portishead and Saltash were the next foundations, both being established in 1884. Ascot followed in 1887. In order to staff these houses with English religious, it was necessary to have an alumniate to which boys might be admitted who showed a disposition for the religious and Franciscan life. A Seraphic College was accordingly set up at Saltash, in Cornwall. A man was needed to be at once rector of the house and parish priest. Father Arsenius was chosen as capable of filling both these offices. He had acquired a certain experience in teaching from his two years at Bordeaux, and he had already a sufficiently good knowledge of English.

In July, 1887, he left for England.

"Last Tuesday evening," he writes to his parents, "I arrived in Paris, and since I was rather run down I stopped there till Friday, when I started for England. I had a good passage, was not sea-sick, and in fact slept all through the night. When I got to

Southampton at half-past six in the morning, I was received most cordially by the parish priest, who is a great friend of the Franciscans. He wished to serve my Mass himself, and would not let me go till I had given him my blessing. At present I am at Clevedon, both to rest myself and to get familiar with the language.

“The Provincial tells me I shall only find two Fathers at Saltash—namely, the Superior and the one who acts as parish priest, and four lay-brothers. The brothers are stopping, but the other two are going as soon as I have got into the way of things there ; but two others are coming to do the teaching. There are already a certain number of boys who have asked to be admitted, six or seven I am told, and we are hoping to have many others. So you see I shall be at the same time superior of the house, rector of the school, and parish priest, with plenty of need for your prayers.”

He wrote again in October, this time from Saltash itself :

“At present we have only three boys, all Irish ; but I am expecting two more. Everything has a small beginning. Every Sunday I preach in English. I am also Military Chaplain to three forts in the district. When I go there the soldiers present arms as though I were a Captain.

“Recently an Anglican clergyman has been converted. He has lost his ‘living’ in consequence, worth about £800 a year ; but he preferred to listen to the voice of God. Now he has practically nothing to live on but a small annuity. His wife

will probably become a Catholic also. They have nine children. The eldest, who is ten years old, was a Catholic already, and used to pray for the conversion of his parents. Four of the others were baptized last week, and the others will be soon."

Whilst Father Arsenius was at Saltash his mother died. In October, when she was already seriously ill, he wrote her a letter full of tender sympathy and devout exhortations. "You cannot do better," he says, "than surrender yourself as you say into the arms of Providence, accepting everything as coming from the hands of God. It is He indeed who visits us with suffering and sickness. I would willingly put myself in your place, but He who nails you to a bed of suffering leaves me untouched." His mother died on November 1, 1887.

Father Arsenius was not destined to remain long at Saltash. His work there was to establish the little college and place it on a good foundation, but it was left for others to carry on the work. In March, 1888, after having been there only eight months, he suddenly got word to leave immediately for Paris. The letter arrived about midday, when the other Fathers were out for a walk. Father Arsenius, reflecting on the peremptory wording of the "obedience," decided that it was his duty to leave at once without waiting to say good-bye to them. He accordingly wrote a short note for the Father who was to take his place, packed his things, and, to the astonishment of the good lay-brother who accompanied him to the station, took the first train there was on his way to Paris.

CHAPTER IV

FOUNDER OF THE FRIARY AT LE PUY, 1888-1891

WHEN Father Arsenius arrived in Paris, he found he had been sent for to establish a House of Observance at Le Puy.

During the Middle Ages Le Puy was one of the great places of pilgrimage in honour of Our Lady, and a centre of Franciscan activity. Though devotion to Notre Dame du Puy survived the Revolution, no trace remained of the Friars and their work. The Bishop, Monsignor Fulbert Petit—subsequently Archbishop of Besançon—was very favourable to the project of founding a Franciscan house in the town, as he saw how useful the Fathers would be, especially during the times of pilgrimage. The Superiors, on their side, were most anxious that the Order should return to the scenes of its past labours, hallowed by the memories of St. Antony of Padua and of St. Colette, who had both lived at Le Puy. Moreover, they had in view the establishment of a House of Recollection—*i.e.*, one where the Rule is observed with greater strictness than elsewhere, especially as regards prayer and the observance of poverty; and it was thought that Le Puy would prove a suitable place.

Everything having been satisfactorily arranged, Father Arsenius was sent to Le Puy in March, 1888, to set on foot and be the first Superior of the new house. The convent, adjoining the seminary, and not far from the cathedral, is built on the side of the rocky hill called Corneille, and just below the great statue of Notre Dame de France, which was set up in 1860 by Monsignor de Morlhon to commemorate the numerous graces and miracles obtained through the intercession of Our Lady of Le Puy. Only the top of the cathedral and the mountains of the opposite side are visible from the convent. It is quite withdrawn from the noise of the city, and is inaccessible to carriages. The calm of the desert reigns there. Only from a little corner at the top of the garden, called "the promised land," is it possible to see the town. The whole was at one time the property of some Dominican nuns, and the Venerable Joan de Langeac once lived there.

The old house had long been empty, being left as an abode for rats and spiders. The windows and doors let in wind and rain, and rubbish of all sorts was strewn over the rooms. The first thing Father Arsenius did was to borrow a broom so as to clear a way for himself through the heaps of rubbish, and to sweep down the cobwebs which almost blinded him. Only for the first night would he consent to be the guest of the Poor Clares. On the following day he begged some straw, and decided to remain henceforward in his convent. Thus he passed several days, begging his food as alms, and waiting for the arrival of the other religious who were to co-operate with him in this foundation.

Such poverty as this delighted him. "Never was I so happy in my life," he said afterwards. A packing-case served for his table, a piece of wood for his candlestick. The Abbess of the Poor Clares at Le Puy relates how, on learning that Father Arsenius was begging for his bread, she came to an arrangement with the baker by which the latter undertook to look in from time to time to see that the Father had sufficient. In spite of every effort to conceal what she had done, Father Arsenius suspected it. He went to the Abbess, thanked her for her kindness, but begged her to allow him henceforward to get all he wanted in his own way and in accordance with the poverty of St. Francis. He wrote thus to a Definitor-General of the Order some time later :

"I came here with my Breviary, two pairs of drawers, six napkins, and six handkerchiefs. I found the four bare walls of a house which the Bishop rents. I had literally to beg for everything, whilst refusing stipends for Masses or Missions, or any alms in money, except sometimes when persons made offerings for things which can't be got by begging. I used these sometimes to buy the necessary books."

In December, 1888, he wrote to a priest :

"We thought of writing to you four days ago, but we had no stamps, and no means of getting any. Those which you have sent—for which many thanks—enable us now to do so. . . . Yes, we pray a lot for you and all who are dear to you. Do not forget us in your Mass, for we have innumerable spiritual

needs. I do not mention temporal needs, for Providence treats us like spoilt children, and provides for everything with wonderful consideration ; so I assure you temporal affairs do not worry me."

Here is an account of these early beginnings, given by the Franciscan Father, who was the first to be associated with Father Arsenius in the work of founding the convent at Le Puy :

"I did not know Father Arsenius by sight, but only by reputation, when I was sent to start the convent with him at Le Puy. I must confess his youth surprised me, for he was barely thirty ; and here it was a question of founding a house which was to be in some sort a convent of Recollection, where the Rule was to be observed as well as possible, especially in all that concerned the use of money. However, I was soon reassured.

"When I arrived, I found, as far as the convent was concerned, an old house with its four walls standing, and nothing more. The day before my arrival a few straw mattresses with some bed-clothes had been introduced, but that was all. We had no beds, tables, or chairs. We had a few planks, which Father Arsenius had begged, and a few cooking utensils borrowed from the convent of St. Clare. We soon set to work.

"Father Arsenius and Brother —— did most of the work as being more expert. I acted as a sort of apprentice. The most important thing was an altar, so that we might have Mass and reserve the Blessed Sacrament. This was the first good piece of business accomplished. Then we turned to the

fundamentals, like beds, tables, and benches. In a few days we had all that was indispensably necessary; poor, but sufficient, was all we wanted.

"Food was supplied the first few days by the Poor Clares, but soon the 'quest' furnished us with all we needed. We have never wanted for food, which was always as sufficient as that supplied in other houses, and even became too abundant. So as not to displease our benefactors, we had to accept all they gave us; but to avoid waste, we gave some away to the poor, or exchanged it with the Procurator of the seminary. The latter lent himself very willingly to these transactions, which were both lawful for us and, I believe, far from disadvantageous to him.

"As regards the 'quest,' let me tell a short anecdote. Father Arsenius wished, as a matter of religious principle, to start with the spiritual Father of the diocese. Monsignor Petit was somewhat taken aback by this step, and remarked, 'Certainly, Father, you are not timid. All the same, you have done well in coming to the Bishop's house. Come again when you have need of anything, but go straight to the kitchen and ask for all you want. I shall show you the way.' He had the kindness to conduct him there himself; but, as far as I know, Father Arsenius was discreet enough not to return there again.

"The ornaments and linen for the altar and all that was necessary for Mass were begged for among the various communities. Father Arsenius asked for things with such simplicity that everyone was only too delighted to give them.

"I have never ceased to admire the wonderful working of Providence during these first days after our arrival. No community ever had a better procurator. Help always came at the right moment. For example, we had no wine for our meals, except what was sent in. Now, wine is both scarce and dear at Le Puy, yet the community never wanted for it. It used to arrive by the quart. Sometimes one person, sometimes another, would bring it, for nothing was fixed. Sometimes the little provision was exhausted at one meal; but Providence never failed to send what was necessary for the next, so that there was nothing but continual exclamations of surprise and gratitude. Ah! what joys did not holy poverty bring us?

"Gaiety, that amiable companion of poverty, reigned in our midst. Father Arsenius was the soul of it. I never saw him sad or discouraged. He could communicate his good spirits to others, even those naturally given to sadness.

"I need hardly say that the regular life, including the midnight Office, was set up immediately, and no one ever went out without a *socius*. Being so few in number, this last point was rather trying; yet Father Arsenius was most anxious it should be observed, even by those who were only going to the seminary, which was next door to us.

"His humility was so great as sometimes to put one in an awkward position. Being younger than I, he often wished to yield up to me the honour belonging of right to the Superior. I remember once, during a visit we paid to the Novitiate of the Christian Brothers at Vals, when invited to address

the novices, Father Arsenius passed on the request to me. I tried to excuse myself, but to no purpose.

"His mortification was continual, and though he contrived to hide it as much as possible, he could not escape the natural curiosity of his brethren, who sought to edify themselves by his example. So as not to attract attention, he conformed to the ordinary life; but when Providence sent him occasions of suffering, he received them with eagerness, and refused all the ordinary remedies till he was reduced to the last extremity.

"I remember one winter the chilblains on his feet were so bad that, in spite of his energy, he was compelled to go to bed. He had to remain there a fortnight because it was feared that gangrene might set in. However, in spite of the remonstrances of the doctor and of the religious, he got up every morning to say Mass. The Bishop, Monsignor Petit, came to see him, and was edified to find him so cheerful in the midst of his sufferings. But as for him, he treated the matter as a mere nothing, and spent his time writing sermons.

"He practised poverty with zealous care, never allowing the use of money. He had a book, written by a Franciscan long ago, containing explanations and commentaries on the more important parts of the Rule, and especially on poverty. Whenever he discovered any passage stronger than usual, expressing the horror the Friar Minor should have for money, he used to be delighted, and never failed to let us know all about it during recreation, regarding it as a great discovery.

"He saw that the provisions for the house were

never too abundant, and when he found more than was necessary for our daily needs, he hastened to distribute them elsewhere.

“At the beginning he had some difficulty with regard to the Third Order, but with great tact he managed to assert his rights and take over the direction of the Confraternity. He organized it more completely and gave it a wider extension. In all delicate matters like this, he managed to maintain just the right attitude, claiming his own rights without infringing upon those of others. He showed himself to be as able an administrator as he was a holy religious.”

Father Arsenius had a great devotion to Our Lady. When he arrived at Le Puy he put up in the chapel a little picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, which he had in his Breviary, and constituted her Superior of the house, calling himself only the Vice-President. Subsequently he acquired a larger and more elaborate picture, which was installed with quite a ceremony.

But the great characteristic of this foundation at Le Puy was undoubtedly the rigid poverty under which it rose and flourished. As we have seen, offerings in money were usually rejected, the “quest” was always for things in kind. Provisions were never stored up for more than two or three days. Yet none ever complained of want. Everything used to come in in abundance. Only once or twice did the bread fail for dinner. One day in winter, whilst the snow was falling heavily, the bell went for dinner, but still there was no bread.

Suddenly a priest came to the door bringing a supply. "During Mass this morning," he said, "I was pursued by the thought that perhaps you had no bread, so I have come now to bring you some in spite of this appalling weather." He went away without giving his name.

Father Arsenius used often to complain of this abundance of provisions.

"Oh, yes," he wrote, "we have need of sun and of dew, we have need for Jesus to warm us and water us and make us grow. If you made saints of us all, you would give back to the Order the seal of its first vocation, and you would convert the world. Here it is inconceivable how people run after men so simple as me and mine; how they venerate us, how they hang on our words; I feel ashamed. As for the abundance of things we enjoy here, I believe God does not hear us, but we pay Him out all the same, for we give and give and give so that the poor are delighted."

Later he wrote again :

"At present I am building the chapel. See how Providence treats us. We had no money at all to start with, but now we have nearly £500, which is ample, for we have got all the stones already, and, besides, we are not going to build a cathedral."

He who was so severe with himself was very kind to others. For the sick especially he used to get chickens and other delicacies. One night he went down to the hospital to beg some tea for a religious who was sick. There was a lay-brother in Paris

who had joined the Order rather late in life, and had left a comfortable position in the world to do so. When he was sent to Le Puy he felt the change very much, as he had contrived to make himself at home in Paris. A few days after he had left he wrote thus to the Guardian there :

"I felt very miserable during the journey, and arrived at Le Puy encumbered with a heavy bag and a large parcel. I could not carry both myself, but fortunately a tall friar was waiting for me at the station. He received me very affectionately, and took hold of my luggage, putting one bundle on his shoulder and carrying the other in his hand. We talked all the way, and I was delighted and consoled at the thought of enjoying the company of such a nice religious. The hill up to the convent is very steep, and I did not like to see my companion struggling up alone under the heavy weight he was carrying. I accordingly offered to help him, but he refused. When we got to the convent I asked, 'Where shall I find the Superior?' 'The Superior?' he replied; 'oh, that's myself.' Judge of my embarrassment. Here was the Father Superior, who had carried up my heavy luggage, as though he had been the lowest of the lay-brothers."

He added that he was as happy as possible, and that the convent was a regular paradise.

Although there were only three Fathers and two brothers at Le Puy, Father Arsenius established all the regular observances of a big community. Even when there were only two there was midnight choir. If he was alone he stopped up usually till half-past

eleven, and rose again at four. The bell was rung for all the Community exercises, though sometimes he was the only one to attend them. Every Saturday he put on surplice, stole, and cope, and sang the *Tota Pulchra* in choir very energetically, with sometimes but one brother to answer; then he would bless the empty stalls. When asked one day why he did this even when the religious were absent, "Angels are there, and represent them," he answered. In choir Father Arsenius never leaned back in his stall, and when he said his Office privately it was his usual custom to do so kneeling. He gave the prescribed conferences regularly to the lay-brothers, even if only one was able to be present. He was always busy in the convent writing sermons, reading many spiritual books, often prolonging his watchings far into the night. He fasted throughout the year, taking only some coffee in the morning, and for the evening collation generally a plate of vegetables. He bore on his back a cross with iron points; he wore a hair-shirt and an iron girdle. He made no effort to warm himself in winter, and even left the window of his cell open; yet in that mountainous region the cold is often severe. "Pray God to inflame our hearts," he wrote; "for I assure you our bodies do not burn."

On Holy Thursday, a few days after his arrival at Le Puy, Father Arsenius went to the Cathedral to receive the Easter Communion with the other priests of the town. Throughout the Mass he remained standing barefoot, without sandals, on the stone floor of the church. On another occasion, in April, 1890, when returning from a Mission preached at

Saint André de Chalençon, one of his sandals caused him such pain that he took both off and walked for about eleven miles barefoot in the mud. His habit was generally patched and worn, as he preferred them in this condition. He was given a heavy new habit once, which he wore cheerfully throughout the heat of the summer; but when autumn came, seeing one of his religious with only a very thin and worn habit, he made him exchange and take the thick one. The reason was obvious, but there was nothing for it but to obey.

No wonder such a man once wrote : "To live our true life, which is Jesus—*mihi vivere Christus est; vivo jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus*—we must die to ourselves in everything; we must die to our body and to our health, to our spirit and to our judgment, to our ideas and desires and affections, to our honour and to our reputation, and even to any specified degree of sanctity, which is generally a form of self-seeking; whilst, on the contrary we must live solely in Jesus and on Jesus, thinking as He does in all things, speaking with Him, living with Him, having only His desires and His affections, thinking only of Him, speaking only of Him, possessing Him alone, in such sort as to be able to say with all truth, *Deus Meus et Omnia*."

With Le Puy as a centre, Father Arsenius went about during these years giving frequent Missions. For these he was well fitted, not only intellectually—his classical and theological studies had been extensive—but, above all, spiritually. He had a strong, deep voice, and a natural and intensely earnest way of speaking which touched even the

most hardened. He went about this great work of preaching, not in any trifling and self-confident spirit, but with the deep misgivings of a true apostle.

"I assure you," he wrote in January, 1891, "I have an instinctive dread of preaching, a sort of spiritual fear. Not that I am nervous when I preach—you can see for yourself that that does not trouble me—but I am in dread always lest I may not be doing God's work. I feel the same in the confessional. Pray God to enable me to do His will. If He wishes it, I shall go on preaching in my own poor way."

Here is a characteristic entry among some notes on the "Way to Conduct Missions," drawn up by Father Arsenius :

"Before mounting the pulpit let him (the Missioner) lie prostrate with his face to the earth, confessing his insufficiency, since the conversion of souls is God's work ; then, having laid his words in the hearts of Jesus and Mary, that the Holy Spirit may deign to make use of these poor instruments, let him rise up with the greatest confidence in Jesus and Mary."

When on a Mission, unless he was more than usually tired, Father Arsenius used to rise at four in the morning, take the discipline, make his meditation, and then prepare his sermons or write letters. He had a large correspondence with the many religious who, after God, owed their vocations to his advice. Even when outside his convent he kept up

what for several years was his habitual practice—viz., daily confession. In later life he reduced the number of his confessions to once every two or three days.

As a penitential exercise, and also to draw down the blessings of God, Father Arsenius was accustomed to travel as far as possible on foot, no matter what the weather might be.

"Did I tell you," he wrote in May, 1889, "that we go on foot when we give Retreats and Missions. I believe half the work is already done in this way. The last time I had to walk about thirty-seven miles, this time thirty-one. Oh, if we were only true to our vocation, real children of St. Francis, how we should win souls!"

Father Arsenius, in fact, made a vow about this time to go always as far as possible on foot. Later on he was dispensed from the vow, though he always clung to the practice as faithfully as he could. The following letter gives us some idea of the circumstances under which he made it:

"LE PUY,

"November 15, 1889.

"At last I am back in the little nest. I must tell you something about my travels. At . . . I begged some bread in the station. This is certainly the hardest thing in our life; Nature never knuckles under to it. It is all very well asking those we know, but taking one's chance is very different. That was why, at this station, although it was seven o'clock, I said to myself I could easily wait a little

as I was not hungry ; but then I decided to beg all the same. At first I was given a piece that some children had fingered, but it was not enough, so I begged another piece and devoured it before everybody. . . . I did not take the train at all ; the little voice within me told me not to take it, to observe the Gospel as often as it was not absolutely forbidden me. On Thursday night I reached the foot of a hill at least six miles long. Although it was dark, I decided to start climbing. The road was all covered with stones, which made things more difficult than ever, but I started off all the same. I must not forget to tell you that that afternoon, whilst thinking over what I had heard in the morning about our way of travelling, I felt myself drawn to make the vow never to go in a carriage or by train except under obedience, or when it was manifestly impossible not to do so. I made it conditionally—that is to say, if I could find someone afterwards who would be willing to ratify it. Well, I was ascending the hill, and I was terribly tired with trying to pick my way in the dark over the stones. I was longing to rest a little, but I resisted again and again. At last I gave in and sat down on a big stone and—a thing which never happened like this before—I fell asleep. How long I slept I don't know. When I awoke it was all I could do to realize where I was. I started off once more. An icy wind added to the difficulties of the road, so that I was almost at the end of my strength. As I made the ascent I had to encourage myself all the time. *Allons, pauvre petit*, I would say, *marche, marche*. At length I got to the top, and it was time

I did. I entered the first house I came to, and, as I did not want to break the fast, I contented myself with some bread and cheese. They gave me also some hot wine and sugar, as much as I wanted, and then I went to lie down. In the morning I started off at four, and reached here at half-past nine, after having done about eighteen miles. I said Mass in the convent."

I shall give but one more example of this truly Franciscan characteristic of Father Arsenius. On the day before he was to commence a Mission in one of the parishes near Le Puy, the Curé of the parish arrived at the convent in order to drive Father Arsenius over, the weather being extremely bad. The offer was, of course, refused, and, in spite of the good Curé's expostulations, he had to drive back alone. Next morning, after Mass, Father Arsenius set out on foot. The cold was so intense that the river Loire, along which much of his road lay, was entirely frozen over, so that carts could pass across it. There was a strong wind, and the snow was lying deep. His habit was soon stiffened by frozen snow and ice, and the constant rubbing of this frozen cloth against his bare legs produced the most dreadful results, cutting them almost like a knife. "I left a red ribbon behind me," he wrote. "The people came out of their houses and wept with compassion. The Mission was already preached and the sinners converted before I came."

During the winter of 1890 Father Arsenius was attacked by influenza. Though he did not, under

the circumstances, rise for Matins at night, he used nevertheless to steal a brief visit to the chapel, and approaching the altar, kneel for a few minutes before the Tabernacle, and then retire again to his cell.

After having spent three years at Le Puy, he hoped that he would now be relieved of his office and allowed to return once more to the state of a simple religious. "I think only of loving our Father, Jesus, and Mary," he wrote at this time to a priest; "of keeping myself hidden and forgotten, desiring and praying that God's will and God's will alone may be done in all things. . . . I hide myself in my hole as much as I can; I never read the papers; as far as possible I wish to know only Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ crucified."

This wish, however, of remaining hidden and forgotten was far from being gratified. The Provincial Chapter held at Amiens in June, 1891, appointed Father Arsenius Guardian of Clevedon and Rector of the Seraphic College, which had been transferred there from Saltash.

CHAPTER V

GUARDIAN OF THE FRIARY, CLEVEDON, 1891-1893

ON June 19, 1891, Father Arsenius started for England. As we have seen, this country was not new to him, for he had already spent almost three years there as a student at Clevedon. In July he wrote to his sister :

"When I had finished my time as Superior at Le Puy, I was hoping for a little rest, but now I have got more to do than ever. I have been sent again to Clevedon, where I have thirty-six in Community to provide for and two parishes to look after, besides the house. Pray hard for me and get prayers said, as I stand in great need."

Again in October he wrote :

"Here I have heaps to do, but God helps me well; for, in spite of the great expenses every month, we succeed in keeping things going easily. Thanks be to God! It is wonderful how Providence watches over us Franciscans."

There can be no doubt that among the many subjects committed to his care the pupils in the

college won the warmest place in his affections. His letters from Clevedon bear unmistakable evidence of this. Two or three days after his arrival he wrote :

"I had a good journey and no sea-sickness. I left Paris on June 19. . . . I arrived here at two o'clock on Saturday. Ah! if you only knew how much I love our dear little boys here! I beg you to pray and get prayers said for them. . . .

"All these days I have been in bed separated from my little ones, on account of two sores on one of my feet. One is now cured, so I am going to start work again as usual, though the other is still rather painful. I beg you to cherish these little ones, to pray for them, and to do them all the good you can think of. They want someone to love them and make them holy. Help me, then, to love them and make them fervent."

At Le Puy Father Arsenius had placed the convent under the protection of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. He did the same now at Clevedon for the Seraphic College, choosing the English Franciscan martyr, Blessed John Forest, as secondary patron. He introduced the custom for the boys of going in procession with lighted candles to the altar of Our Lady every Sunday and there singing the *Salve Regina*.

The following is an account of Father Arsenius by an English religious, who was a boy at the college, and subsequently a student in the Order under him :

"Like all holy men, Father Arsenius loved and practised penance. When he was Guardian at Clevedon, and even as Commissary Provincial, he used, on the eve of great feasts, to take only bread and water for dinner, kneeling in the middle of the refectory. He fasted all the year round. Of the penances ordinarily in use in the Order I do not speak; it suffices to say that he practised them all, and that frequently. He always did some public penance on the days of the monthly Chapter in order to draw down God's blessing upon his words.

"As Director of the students he had his room in the scholasticate, quite close to mine. He took the discipline three times a day—namely, for several minutes after the midnight office; then again in the morning at five, and, lastly, in the evening. All the students could hear him; and when one day during recreation they jokingly alluded to it, he said he did it for those students who were afraid to do it for themselves. For the greater part of the time he fulfilled the office of calling the Community in the morning, and so attached was he to this office that he was unwilling to entrust it to others.

"When he left England to go to Canada, I was given his room. Instead of the ordinary bed, such as we generally use, I found an old door covered with nails and pieces of iron and wood.* Often he did not go to bed at all, retiring to the choir after

* When packing his things Father Arsenius probably no more thought of the bed he was leaving than anyone else would. Presumably, had he thought of it, he would have removed it for the benefit of the next occupant, and replaced it, if possible, by an ordinary one.—TRANSLATOR.

the evening recreation and remaining there till midnight.

“In proportion as he was severe towards himself was he kind to others. For those who were ill he had quite a motherly solicitude. On one occasion three of us had scarlet fever, and were laid up for five weeks. During all this time he looked after us himself, performing even the most menial offices for us; yet he still continued to fast and to go to the midnight choir. Every morning he brought a bath to our rooms, filled it with water, and washed us with his own hands. He used to beg in the town for delicacies for the invalids. To tell the truth, it was a pleasure to be ill; and so well did he look after us, that I was quite sorry to be cured. He was very liberal in dispensing others, especially the students, giving them the rest he denied himself.

“For his brethren in religion he had so deep an affection that he wept during the public reading in the refectory of the General's circular letter, announcing the division of the Province of St. Louis into two separate Provinces. Similarly, when he left Clevedon to go to Canada, it was very touching to see him, whose countenance was usually so austere, melting into tears as he embraced his students. I really believe he had the gift of tears, so often have I seen him weeping. When he sang the Passion in the church on Palm Sunday, his emotion was so great that it affected others also. When he preached he was frequently moved to tears, so that he often had to pause before being able to continue. This was especially notice-

able when he preached on Our Lady or on Heaven. . . .

"He was a model Director of students . . . visiting them frequently in their cells, talking quietly to them and pointing out their faults, a thing he disliked doing in public unless it was absolutely necessary. He was always easy of access, and in spite of his numerous occupations never failed to accompany us on our walks. Always cheerful, notwithstanding his austerities, he was ever ready to talk or to listen, and when he laughed he laughed heartily."

A few further details concerning Father Arsenius may be gathered from the following account :

"I was a novice when Father Arsenius was made Guardian of Clevedon. I need hardly say he was a model for the whole Community. Severe when there was any question of observance, he was nevertheless a real father to all. He was particularly kind to the lay-brothers, and often went to recreation with them. The monthly conference, which he never omitted, was always an exhortation to be faithful to prayer, to foster the inner life and the love of God. Like St. Paul, one could almost say of him that he was in travail till Christ was formed in his young religious. He was afraid they might leave the novitiate without having laid the solid foundations of the religious life. . . .

"From time to time he used to arrange with us to go out for the day. He would come with us, and would make us see how well holiness and gaiety can go together. He unbent wonderfully from his

usually serious demeanour, and put everybody at their ease. All he asked on these occasions was that we should make our meditation and say the Office together."

"On one of these outings," adds another witness, "we were all seated round him under a tree, when he produced Cardinal Manning's *Eternal Priesthood*, and saying, 'We have plenty of good air for the body, let us take something for the soul,' he proceeded to read a passage. Then, when he had finished, he spread out the provisions and cut the bread."

But it was not only about a spiritual edifice that Father Arsenius was busy at Clevedon; there was also a material one to think about. When the students came to join the Community it was necessary to extend the buildings and to set aside a special part for the boys of the Seraphic College.

"The Provincial wants me to build the college," he wrote in March, 1892. "This will require heaps of money. Where can I find it? Our Heavenly Father would manage it for us all right, I know, if we served Him as we ought, but we don't."

He writes again a week later: "The college is begun. The cost is something frightful; almost double what it would be in France; but God can do it." We get a glimpse, however, of one, at any rate, of his sources of income. "I am going soon to start begging among the Protestants," he says; "pray that I may unite the prudence of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove."

Father Arsenius did, in fact, beg not only in Catholic, but also in Protestant, houses; and so simply did he go about it that everyone gave. Alms came in in abundance. One day he begged some bread from an English lady. The latter was quite astonished, thinking all monks must be rich. "*You want bread!*" she said; "but are you really in earnest?" "Quite in earnest," replied Father Arsenius; "the Friars Minor are mendicants." "Well, in that case," said the lady, "here are five shillings." To her surprise, Father Arsenius, instead of taking the money, replied that according to his Rule he was not allowed to touch money, but that, if she wished, she could give it to the sub-syndic of the convent—*i.e.*, a lay-brother who has not yet taken the vow of poverty.

As far as possible, Father Arsenius always preferred that the "quest" should be for things in kind rather than directly for money. He never ceased to impress upon his religious the spirit of the Order—above all, in everything that concerned the virtue of poverty, which he cherished most. He himself gave them the example, living very poorly, and using nothing beyond what was strictly necessary. In his cell he had a candle instead of a lamp, and a stool instead of a chair. He was keenly alive to the truth that only a faithful clinging to the Rule and its spirit, and to the principles of regular observance, could preserve the Order in England or elsewhere, and place it on a durable foundation.

For the rest he gave himself up with equal care to the work of the convent and of the parish, striving to fulfil with exactness the duties of his

office, for he realized the obligations it entailed. Personally, his life at Clevedon was very hidden, and in every way that of an ordinary Superior. He was a reserved man, intimate only with one or two friends, his confessors, and his superior. As for his parishioners, it was clear from his sermons how much he had their welfare at heart. He preached one evening on the miraculous draught of fishes, and when he came to those words of St. Peter, "We have laboured all the night and have taken nothing," he cried out with trembling voice: "And we also—long already have we laboured in this parish, and yet, when we regard the fruits of our toil, must we not also say, 'Ah, Lord! truly we have laboured all the night, yet taken nothing'?"—and he wept abundantly. "Ah, poor souls! poor souls!" he would murmur, as he went about through the streets of the little town; "and to think that in some sort they depend upon me, and that I am their shepherd."

His earnest way of preaching struck everybody, and many Protestants came to hear him. His sermons at first cost him a good deal of trouble. He prepared them with great care, and gave them to a friend to correct. For some time he always read them, but in time he managed to preach without doing so.

On one occasion, when giving a Retreat to a Community of nuns, it happened that one of the sisters was ill and unable to attend the exercises. Father Arsenius went to see her, and spoke to her for some time on the advantages of sufferings and on the way to sanctify them. "But, Father," said

the nun, "you know I am much better, and I expect to be up in a day or two." "No, no," replied Father Arsenius, "do not think that; it is an illusion. Your vocation is to suffer, and you will never get up." In fact, the nun never got better. She lingered on for seven years and then died.*

This man, so tender and yet so austere, was not one of those who, through weakness or a misdirected kindness, cannot correct. He willingly spoke of himself as "Father Growler." "The Superior," he used to say, "is a shepherd. He has no right to let his sheep perish. He must take care of them, get them good food, love them, and, if need be, correct them with charity." Those who lived with him knew that he let nothing pass. He had a little notebook with a page for each religious. He noted things down from time to time, and then had a little talk with each one privately; but he did all this with such sweetness that no one was offended.

Father Arsenius had worked in France and in England. Further labours were now awaiting him in Canada, whither he was summoned in the summer of 1893. The moment of parting was most bitter. In spite of his courage, his heart was overcome with sadness. The boys of the Seraphic College had arranged to read him an address before he left, but he begged them to spare him the emotions such a farewell ceremony would occasion. "Put it in my bag," he said; "I will read it during the voyage, and send you back my reply."

* There are other suggestions of the miraculous in connection with Father Arsenius, but it is only prudent to be extremely reserved on this point.

This was the answer they received, dated from the *Parisian* :

“MY DEAREST CHILDREN,

“After leaving Clevedon my first letter is for you. I have read all the nice things you have said about me. Brother N—— put the paper in his bag, so that I could not read it till I got to my cabin. I see, dear children, I was right in not wishing you to read it to me yourselves. You thought me very hard, perhaps, but really it was because, knowing how much I love you and how soft my heart is, I was afraid I should not be strong enough to bear up. Other reasons I need not detail led me to refuse your offer, but the chief one was that I knew the affection of your hearts, and it made me afraid.

“I was deeply moved, dear children, to say no more, by all you have written to me. How can I thank Almighty God and His Blessed Mother for it all? Ah, no! the grace of God has not been in vain in you. I remember telling you often that I was preaching in the desert; but that was only a way of speaking, for I acknowledge that you have been for me a source of many and great consolations. My very, very dearest children, whom I love from my heart, for two years I have been amongst you, exhorting you to sanctity, by my words at least. Do you wish to do something to please me? Ah! with abundant tears I ask it, are you willing to do something to please your poor Father? Then never forget what I have so often told and explained to you—try to become great saints.

“I cannot understand myself, nor why I have

wept over this letter more than over any other I ever wrote ; yet perhaps you would not be surprised if you knew all as I do. . . .

"And now, dear children, I must end, for I assure you I have no strength to write more. Doubt not but that you will be in my heart always, and I shall never forget you. Every day of my life I shall think of you in my prayers and during Mass.

"I said Mass this morning in my cabin. Besides the religious, there were present three Canadian priests and two Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. The two poor sisters were ill during the night, and could not go to Communion, but all the others went. God grant we may be able to have Mass every day.

"I shall try and write a few lines to each one in particular. For the present all goes well, except my heart, where there is a big void, as you can well imagine. Work hard, all of you, to do the will of God, and to be true children of Our Heavenly Father and Mother.

"This letter is meant also for my dear new novices. They are in good hands, and I hope they will try earnestly to become apostolic men.

"I embrace you all, and remain,

"Your most affectionate Father,

"F. A."

He wrote also thus to the Community at Clevedon:

"MY DEAREST AND BELOVED CHILDREN,

"Yesterday morning I thought to myself how brave I was, but it did not last long. It can't be helped ; I did not know I was so weak. I knew

well you were one with me, but I did not know it would be so hard to leave you. Alas ! what a feeble creature I am.

“ Dearest children, keep closely united together in spirit. We always managed to do so, by God’s grace. Sanctify yourselves, not only for yourselves, but also for the sake of those young plants, which can be so easily trained as we will. Adieu, my very dear children. No need to say I pray for you, because I am all yours ; neither do I ask you to pray for me, because you are wholly mine in Jesus and Mary.

“ Once again I press you to my heart and bless you.

“ Your most affectionate Father,

“ F. A.”

CHAPTER VI

GUARDIAN OF THE FRIARY, MONTREAL, 1894-1895

THE Franciscan Recollects were the first to evangelize the native Indians of Canada, and the first to shed his blood for the work was the Frenchman, Father Nicholas Viel. For about two hundred years the Order flourished in Canada, working with great zeal for the salvation of souls. But it dwindled away under the chilling influences of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the last survivor, Father Louis Bonami, died in 1849.

For many years the Canadians were anxious that the sons of St. Francis should return to them, but it was not till 1890 that a foundation was made at Montreal. The first home of the Friars was a poor little house in the parish of St. Joseph, Richmond Street. The present house in Dorchester Street was acquired two years later, owing chiefly to the munificent donations of two ladies, Mrs. Tiffin and Mrs. Mac-Konkey.

Father Arsenius was sent for the first time to Canada in July, 1893, as delegate of the Provincial, with the object of smoothing away certain difficulties. He returned to England and Clevedon almost immediately, not, however, without having preached a little

in Canada, for he notes with pleasure that his first sermon there was on Our Lady. It was not till February, 1894, that he was definitely appointed by the Chapter, Guardian of Montreal and Commissary Provincial of Canada, though the appointment seems to have been communicated to him beforehand. He wrote thus from Clevedon as early as January 14:

"I sail from Liverpool on February 8, which means leaving here probably on the 7th. But before this I have to go to Paris for the Chapter, which is on the 2nd. . . . I am told they are anxious to have me back at Montreal, but personally I dread going. I wouldn't mind at all going as an ordinary religious, but it is this title of Commissary that troubles me."

A fortnight later he wrote:

"I have not much time to write a long letter. All I wish to say is that I shall be at Paris till the 10th, and that I shall sail from Havre, so that I shall not return to Clevedon. I have only told two of the Community here, so that the majority expect to see me again. I prefer to leave them thus."

Father Arsenius reached Montreal once more on February 22, 1894. The church of the convent was almost finished when he arrived; only the interior had not yet been completed. It was opened during Holy Week. Similarly, the new part of the monastery had also been finished; it only remained to re-arrange the old buildings. The Seraphic College had been founded in 1892 by Father Andrew-Mary, who was its first Rector. It was

placed under the patronage of the Boy-martyrs of Japan.

The house at Montreal was to be the centre for a Province. It comprised already the college, the novitiate, and the scholasticate. The Superior had to attend to each of these departments. The Fathers were not numerous, and were busy outside, so that the work of internal administration fell almost entirely on Father Arsenius.

A few extracts from his letters of this period will give some idea as to how his time was spent :

"It is inconceivable," he writes in May, 1894, "the amount of work I have on my hands here. Such crowds for the confessional and parlour. In the parlour all I do is to speak of God and the need of sanctification."

Then a few days later :

"As you see, I write without waiting to hear from you. I want to recommend to you several Retreats I am going to give to our Tertiaries: one to the Confraternity of Sisters; another to that of the Brothers; one to the English-speaking Confraternity; but before this, one to the Tertiaries who serve the hospital, and then heaps of other things besides. Pray for me that I may brace myself up for all this work. From morning till late at night I am simply overwhelmed with it, and I would be hard put to it if I had to say what I do for my soul."

In June he wrote as follows :

"Cheer up; I am not dead yet, though I have preached three Retreats: one of six days, four in-

structions a day, and not less than half an hour each, often nearly an hour; the second of eight days, and four instructions a day, with not less than half an hour for the morning meditation, and for the others at least three-quarters of an hour, often an hour or even an hour and a half; the third, with one instruction a day, but always for more than three-quarters of an hour, and I was told I was too short. Pray now for the English Retreat during the first eight days of July.

"I can assure you I work and toil without consolation; my only consolation lies in never having desired anything like this, and in going forward quite simply, asking only for the strength to do my duty.

"I bless God for the fervour which reigns among the children of whom you speak. Here we don't do too badly, I think. Pray that we may belong wholly to God."

"I am always of the same way of thinking," he writes in August; "I reserve myself for eternity. But, while I am waiting, I assure you I do not rest. I hardly know where to turn. There are masses of letters to dispose of, and yet I am hardly ever in my room. When I am, it is like a regular siege, knocking all the time. I can make no pleasant little pilgrimages now, for I am in the breach always. However, God be praised for it all! We have nine boys, and I am expecting three more. At present we can hardly put up more than twelve.

"I recommend to you a Retreat in a diocesan college from September 25 to 29; a Retreat for ladies from October 21 to 25; a Retreat for girls

from November 11 to 15; the Community Retreat from November 19 to 29; one, probably next week, to the Franciscan nuns in Quebec; and my own, I don't know when. I have got all these to preach.

"Ah! I assure you I am far from being on fire with love, though I earnestly long to be. No need for me to have recourse to untruths in order to humble myself."

"The heat here has made me suffer a good deal," he writes in October, "so that I have been obliged to rest during the afternoon like the others, instead of stopping awake; and since the whole day is simply taken up with work, you can well imagine that I have not much time to spare.

"Ah! pray the Divine Master and His Blessed Mother to give me courage and patience. If I had only to busy myself about the inside or the outside, I should be able to manage all right, but I have to do both.

"We kept up the Feast of St. Francis in great style. Seven Dominican Fathers were here. God helps us well. Can you believe it? Since I have been here we have managed to get rid of quite a lot of our debts. I have found a lady who is going to build the college for us next year. It will cost a great deal, but she is going to pay.

"I wish you a happy feast. And yet the longer I live the more I think it impossible to have a happy feast in this world. Life is too sad. However, every day brings us nearer the end."

This idea of life upon earth as being equivalent to exile, and of death as the journey home, recurs

frequently in the letters of Father Arsenius. Often also does he speak of the combats to be sustained before the palm of victory can be won. Here are some examples of this line of thought taken from letters written from Montreal in 1894 :

"Yes, you must resign yourself to struggle always, to suffer always. The life of man upon earth is a warfare. *Estote fortes in bello et possidebitis regnum æternum*. I ask the Divine Master to fill you with His graces, with a great horror of sin, an unwavering faith, firm hope, ardent charity, and above all with peace. But I do not ask Him to give you sensible consolations ; as far as these go, *fiat voluntas Dei*. Do not trouble about my body, but pray and get prayers said for my soul that I may save it. If you only knew what a life I lead ! What a drudgery it is ! Not an instant's rest, not a minute to myself. I am in anguish about my own soul and those of my religious, for I cannot attend to them as I would wish. We must pass through fire and water before we can reach our eternal home."

"Very true: *Quod æternum non est nihil est*. Let us be patient, then, for this life passes away. With the help of grace we shall reap what we have sown. I assure you I am far from real fervour ; business matters engross me too much. No, the Blessed Sacrament must not be neglected. It is certainly faith which teaches us that the Divine Master is there, His Heart full of love for us, and ready to shower down all His graces upon our souls. It is He indeed who says to us : *Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis et ego*

reficiam vos. Yes, it is He indeed; who can doubt it? He waits for us to pray to Him, for ourselves, for sinners, for the souls in Purgatory, for the entire Church. Courage, then, courage! Repeat often the acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, and Contrition; they are treasures. I share your joys and your sorrows, and do not forget you before God."

"I am going into Retreat to-night, so I am working off my letters. My bodily health is excellent, now that winter has come, and in this Retreat I am going to set to work on my soul, so that I shall be perfect all round. I love the image of death, because I love and cherish death itself; but it seems in no hurry to come to me. Pray hard that I may persevere after my Retreat, because I am going to make some good resolutions. Pray for my religious, for my boys and for my benefactors, and ask for me, as my Christmas gift to the Infant Jesus, a love for the Blessed Virgin."

The following is an account of Father Arsenius by a religious who knew him in Canada. Speaking of his sermons, he writes :

"He was no orator and had no ready flow of words. His diction was stilted, but his ideas were so lofty and yet so practical, and he put such feeling and energy into all he said, that no one found it tedious listening to him. His teaching was always enforced by quotations from Scripture, the Fathers, ascetical writers, and lives of the Saints, and above all by the experience of his own deep knowledge of the human heart.

"In his dealings with seculars his manner was

always one of reserved politeness. His austere demeanour and quiet way of speaking impressed everybody, so that men of the world and even Protestants carried away an impression of sanctity. He never allowed the visits he made or received to be prolonged to any length of time.

"His original intention at Montreal was to refuse all stipends for Masses, etc., but difficulties arose which compelled him to modify it. However, the religious Communities in the town were served free of all charge, and outside he always gave the preference to those who explained how impossible it was for them to offer an honorarium.

"At Montreal we lived entirely on alms freely offered, or begged from certain families we knew. This mode of life won us great sympathy among the people. Every day crowds came to ask for prayers and even miracles, each one usually bringing a little present of bread or tea, butter or meat, etc. The wealthier sort brought things in larger quantities, and some arranged with their bakers and butchers, etc., to supply regular provisions at various intervals. Thus sometimes we had little, sometimes much. I have seen arrive at the convent as many as a hundred cabbages, a quarter of beef, and eighty six-pound loaves of bread. In such circumstances we used to send for the Little Sisters of the Poor to carry away what we did not need. At other times even necessities would be wanting. In order to insure a regular and uniform supply, it was arranged with certain people not to bring alms unless asked. Then when necessity arose they would be informed, and a brother would go round

with a bag or basket to their houses, or, if they preferred, to the shops with which they dealt. Usually it was the brothers who went on the 'quest,' but I have seen the Fathers do it also. I remember seeing Father Arsenius going out once or twice with his wallet.

"Father Arsenius was very fond of Canada on account of the strong and simple faith he found there; and I think, had he been allowed his choice, he would have remained there always. This feeling of affection was certainly mutual, and his death was felt as a great loss by the Canadians, who knew him. He well understood the work that had to be done in Canada—viz., to re-establish the Order and renew the ancient traditions of the Franciscan Recollects. Consequently he made himself familiar with the character and customs of the country in order to adapt the Rule to the necessities of place and people. He paid special attention to the development of the young Canadians who came to the Seraphic College and to the novitiate.

"As Superior, though keenly zealous for the strict maintenance of regular observance, he showed always great kindness of manner. He was always loath to find fault, and if ever he felt himself obliged to do so, his custom was to speak first privately to the person in question, and in such a way as to encourage him to give any explanation there might be. If anything was told him about a religious, he carefully avoided all precipitation; but if the matter appeared to him serious, he would ask an explanation in private. His subjects, in consequence, had complete confidence in him, and looked upon him as

a father. If his good faith was occasionally taken unawares, he did not hesitate to acknowledge it, so that no one ever had occasion to entertain a grudge against him.

"Whilst Superior he never came to any decision concerning the Community or even any individual subject without consulting the Discretorium or Council of the house; and, although as Delegate Provincial he had full powers, he ordinarily abode by its decisions. I can only recall one instance to the contrary. He was far, however, from wanting either in initiative or practical judgment. He usually thought out well beforehand the questions he intended to place before the Discretorium, but at the same time he welcomed a free discussion of his intentions and motives. Every member could speak as he wished and be sure of a hearing.

"The Confraternities of the Third Order were not directly under his charge, but he expressed his wish that the Directors should aim at a uniformity of method based on the decisions of the Discretorium.

"Father Arsenius had a great devotion to the Passion and to Our Blessed Lady. Also, as far as I could discover, besides that of Our Lady, he said frequently the Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit. I often heard him use during Mass the prayer, *Ad petendum donum lacrymarum*, when the rubrics allowed it. He made the Stations of the Cross every day, and even as Superior frequently did penance in the refectory."

Another religious who, like the preceding, received the habit with Father Arsenius, and who lived with him for thirteen years, writes as follows:

"Father Arsenius left at Montreal the reputation of being a really holy man. He strove to make a love of silence and of regularity reign in the Community. He was devoted to the midnight choir, and never exempted himself from it, however tired he might be. . . .

"His fast was continual. I do not ever remember seeing him breakfast in the morning, except for the frustulum allowed by theologians. In the evening he took only vegetables even on the most solemn feasts.

"He went to confession every day. In spite of his austere demeanour, he was always affable and pleasant when one spoke to him."

His austerities and the press of business weighed sorely even on the strong constitution of Father Arsenius. He began to suffer from headaches, making work impossible. He attributed them solely to fatigue; but it seems another cause was as much responsible for them—namely, a sort of congestion due to the cold. In spite of the rigours of a Canadian winter, Father Arsenius almost always went out barefoot and bareheaded, although he forbade others to do so; and this seems to have at least aggravated his illness.

In order to try and pick up he went to the little convent at Three Rivers, but the remedy proved worse than the disease. The isolation of the place weighed upon him, so that he could not bring himself to live outside his Community more than ten days. He returned to Montreal, and went to a hospital for a week, where the Sisters of St. Joseph looked after him.

"It is the custom," he writes, "for priests and

religious to come here when they are ill. . . . The only remedy for me is rest ; I take as much as I can."

About six weeks later, March 26, 1895, he wrote as follows :

"I started work again more than a fortnight ago, and have been attending all the religious exercises both during the day and the night. It is very difficult to rest when everybody else is hard at work. As long as I did not fast as usual I was good for nothing ; but once I started to fast at the beginning of Lent, I felt all right. Such is the force of old habits."

However, Father Arsenius was far from cured. The return to work brought on a recurrence of his old trouble, and his headaches were as bad as before. A complete rest was obviously necessary. The Provincial decided that he had better return to Europe, and on May 4, 1895, he was on his way back to Clevedon. He reached Liverpool on the 15th, spent two nights in London in order to meet the Provincial, and reached Clevedon on the 17th.

On the 24th he wrote :

"I was thoroughly worn out when I got here, and almost at my last gasp. A sea-voyage is always tiring, and then I was already a good deal knocked up before leaving. However, I am much better already. The bracing air here strengthens me immensely, and besides, the affection with which everybody, and especially the boys, received me here, has done me a world of good.

"Don't pray that I may regain my health, at any rate before the Chapter. I am not in the least one of those who are regarded as *necessary* men. Besides,

it is good to have to suffer and to feel how incapable and useless one is. Pray rather that God may enlighten those who are to take part in the elections, that the spirit of St. Francis may be made to flourish in our Provinces. The Chapter will probably be held at Brive, and, since I belong to the Northern Province, this will probably be the last time I shall be anywhere near my native place. The Provincial offered me leave to spend a few days with my brothers and sisters and all my nephews and nieces, but I replied that I did not think it necessary, and I have heard nothing more since then."

Father Arsenius remained at Clevedon till July, when he crossed over to France to do some business as Delegate of the Provincial at Orleans. He then took up his residence at Lille, where he remained till September, when he went to attend the Chapter at Brive.

From Lille Father Arsenius wrote as follows to a boy in the Seraphic College at Montreal:

"I suppose by this time all the worry of the examination is over, and you are free to play as much as you like with N——, or some other great man like that. How are you getting on, my dear little fellow? I hope you have not forgotten that you must sanctify everything, even your recreation. I think, dear child, you are on the right road; only be careful not to be *too* fond of your pet studies, of your walks and games. You must not think of remaining in the ordinary path of holiness, since you have to be nothing less than a great saint. Remember how important this is, and be sure I do not forget you in my prayers."

CHAPTER VII

PROVINCIAL, 1895-1898

THE Provincial Chapter of 1895 was a particularly important one. For some time the French Province of the Friars Minor of the Observance had, besides the whole of France, embraced also some houses in England and in Canada. In 1892, when Father Arsenius was still Guardian of Clevedon, a tentative division into two Provinces had been decided on and carried out; and now, in 1895, the separation was to be permanently established. The Northern Province, the Province of France, with its headquarters at Paris, was to include the Convents of St. Briec, Orleans, Amiens, Lille, Roubaix, and Epinal, in France, the three houses in England, and the two then existing in Canada. The Southern Province, the Province of St. Louis, with its headquarters at Bordeaux, was to embrace the Convents of Pau, St. Palais, Béziers, Le Puy, Limoges, Brive, and Bourges in France, and Fribourg in Switzerland.

The election for the Provincial of the Northern Province took place at Brive on September 8. Father Arsenius was elected. When he received the news, he went down into the Grotto of

St. Anthony below the convent, where he had knelt as a boy before going to the novitiate, and leaning his arms upon the altar, with his head in his hands, began to weep there and pray. "Give me your sympathy and your prayers," he wrote the same day, "for I have had the misfortune to be elected Provincial of the Province of France."

The following is taken from the first circular letter he addressed to the Province :

"VERY REVEREND FATHERS AND MOST DEAR BROTHERS,

"It is with an emotion you will well understand that I address you for the first time. On September 8 the Capitular Fathers were assembled in the Convent of St. Anthony at Brive for the elections. The results are already known to you. On that day God saw fit that I should become your Father. I confess that the designs of Providence are impenetrable, and it is with a sense of awe that I bow myself down before the manifestation of God's will ; however, I am not without confidence. On the very day of the elections we were keeping the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. What have they to fear who belong to Mary ? As then, I have entrusted you all without reserve to Our Blessed Lady ; do you also, whom God has entrusted to me, strive to become faithful servants of our great Queen and fear nothing. A true servant of Mary has much to suffer, but he is always consoled, sustained, and strengthened by this tender Mother. A true servant of Mary will never perish. She will show herself our Mother, and will lead us along the

ways of God. Her hand is gentle, but sure. She knows well how to guide us, and she will obtain for us the graces we need to be true to our vocation.

"I find a further motive for courage in the words of to-day's Gospel, the fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Our Divine Master there teaches us the most absolute trust in his all-merciful Providence. Our Heavenly Father is willing to provide for all our wants. What He asks of us is that we seek His kingdom and His justice—*i.e.*, that we fulfil exactly our duties to Him and to our neighbour, by practising all the virtues of religion. Then does He wish us to live in peace like children without fear in their Father's arms.

"It is consoling to think of these words of Our Lord Jesus Christ in a time so full of menace as the present, when the evil designs of God's enemies against His Church are everywhere apparent. Still, relying on the promises of God, and firm in our resolve to be true to our obligations, we know that all things will work together unto good.

"Precisely, then, on account of these pressing dangers, do I make it my duty to recall to you the need for the spirit of prayer, and to exhort you to pray more fervently. As our needs grow, so also should our faithfulness to prayer.

"Apostolic men, preachers of the Word of God, have special need for this spirit of prayer. This is why St. Paul says: 'We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word' (Acts vi. 4). Prayer first, and then the ministry of the Gospel. In fact, what can an apostle do without God's grace in a work which is entirely dependent

on grace? But can this grace be obtained without fervent and continual prayer? Have we not the example of Jesus Christ, who, after preaching during the day, spent the nights in prayer? and was it not thus that all the Saints acted? It is certainly for this reason that Our Seraphic Patriarch so earnestly recommends to us the spirit of prayer. He wishes that nothing should contrive to divert us from prayer, but that, on the contrary, everything should serve to excite it in our souls, and to make us pass our lives in an atmosphere of prayer. Oh, let us strive to lead a hidden life, for though we may seem to be doing less among men, we shall in reality be doing far more! It is often a desire to gratify the spirit of dissipation, which is the real underlying motive for constantly engaging in eternal work. But men are made better by example rather than by words, and our real influence on souls will be in proportion to our interior spirit and to our union with Jesus Christ. Was it not for this reason that St. Paul could say, 'We are the good odour of Christ'? He was so united with Jesus Christ as to form but one with Him.

"Another fundamental point in religious life which I would recall, dear Fathers and brothers, to your zeal is the sacrifice of self-will and devotion to work. . . . Listen to and meditate on those words, which we read every Friday, in the tenth chapter of the Rule: 'Let the brethren who are subject remember that for God's sake they have renounced their own will. Wherefore I firmly command them to obey their Superiors in all things which they have promised the Lord to keep, and which are not

contrary to their soul or our Rule. . . .’ The duty of a religious is to make himself known to his Superior, and openly to manifest to him his difficulties. Then let him be faithful to the advice given him and, full of confidence in God, place himself unreservedly in the hands of obedience. I have never heard nor read of a case in which a truly obedient religious had cause to regret having trusted to those words of God, ‘He who heareth you, heareth Me.’ God is not so unjust as to abandon those who put their trust in Him. It is the obedient man who speaks of victories.

“Devotion in work springs from charity and abnegation of self-will. It consists also in helping others, Superiors and brethren in their work, even at the cost of sacrifice. Oh, how I beg of God to spread amongst us the spirit of holy charity and fraternal devotion, which will help us to bear cheerfully one another’s burdens, and thus fulfil the law of Jesus Christ !

“In concluding this letter, I beg the Sacred Heart of Jesus, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary and of our glorious Father St. Francis, to grant you all the grace and the spirit of prayer, the spirit of poverty and of detachment from the world, the fulness of His Divine Spirit with all its gifts.

“Recommending myself earnestly to your fervent prayers, I give you from my heart the Seraphic blessing.

“FATHER A.”

Shortly after his election as Provincial, Father Arsenius was obliged to go to Canada. He sailed

from Havre on September 21. However, his visit was a very short one, for by the end of October he was back again in England. On October 31 he wrote thus from Clevedon :

“I am back again in Clevedon since the 30th, but I shall have to be in France in ten days. I had an excellent voyage, and was able to say Mass every day. Affairs in France cause me much anxiety, and I go there with great mistrust. However, Almighty God helped me so clearly during the three weeks I was at Montreal, that this gives me hopes for my work in France.”

During the last days of the December of this year, from the 17th to the 26th, Father Arsenius made his retreat in the convent at Amiens. Here are some of the thoughts and resolutions which occupied his mind during this time, and which were found among his notes after his death :

“During this Retreat I am going to trace out for myself a way of life whereby I may serve God faithfully in the charge which Providence has laid upon me. Since September 8 my incapacity to govern so many religious has been sufficiently borne in upon me. I think our Heavenly Father has made me understand how completely I ought to distrust myself, and confide absolutely in His all-powerful kindness and in the all-merciful tenderness of Mary.

“In order that my trust may not savour of presumption, I must on my side do everything that depends on myself ; above all, I must set myself to

become a man of prayer, convinced that prayer will make me all-powerful, and will obtain for me everything. Up till now I have looked in my prayers too much to myself, who am unworthy to be heard. Henceforth I wish to look to the merits of Jesus, and to implore His mercy with unbounded confidence. I wish also to fix myself more than ever on the virtues of faith, hope, charity, and contrition.

“I do not exercise myself sufficiently in the virtue of hope; nor, as I have said, do I look enough to the mercy of God and to the merits of Jesus. I am sure to obtain all that God wishes to give us, for He does not reject the prayers of a father for his children. I know that the negligence of Superiors in not praying for their subjects often entails for these a considerable loss. If our Heavenly Father takes notice of a blade of grass or a hair, what must His care be for a whole Province! I shall call upon all the Angels and Saints to intercede for us, and Mary will be my advocate.

“First of all, charity towards God; since, without that, the rest is nothing. To this I shall add contrition, and then, charity towards my neighbour. God we cannot benefit in any least degree; then let us help His children at least by prayer.

“As to the practice of other virtues, I shall bear in mind that for my brethren I am the representative of God and His ambassador. I shall do my utmost to imitate His perfections. Consequently, I shall practise mercy, justice, providence, wisdom, simplicity, power (by prayer), divine peace (by

patience), gentleness, kindness, benignity, affability, which will make me as accessible to all and at all times as our Father Himself, to whom we can all and always speak.

"I shall imitate Jesus Christ by a life wholly apostolic, full of humility and completely merged in His. I shall call to mind that He is the Good Shepherd and the Prince of Pastors. He has made Himself our Father, our Mother, our Physician, our Friend, our Counsellor. He is our Master in the way which we are to follow ourselves, and which we are to preach to others. He spoke only of the things of Heaven, of the kingdom above, and of the means of reaching it. Let us act likewise, and set aside every subject which does not lead to God. He is not only our spiritual Director, He is also our Judge and the Censor of all the actions of our inner life. He will correct us as He corrected His Apostles. I wish to have constant recourse to His advice in everything I have to do, and then, being in His hands, to be afraid of nothing.

"I shall imitate the Holy Spirit, who spreads His divine influences over us in the most secret of ways by His preventing graces which bring victory, and by His inspirations, full of hidden sweetness. So do I desire to make my influence felt by means of continual prayer.

"In all this I shall be imitating Mary. It is to her that I confide all that has been given to me, to her that I confide myself. She will be my joy, my consolation, my well-beloved, my hope, my adviser. My eyes will be always fixed upon her, to be ravished by her beauty, to love her, to

imitate her, to learn my obligations from her and the most perfect way of accomplishing them.

"I shall imitate our Father St. Francis by poverty, mortification, obedience, by travelling on foot, by a horror of money, by charity and kindness. I shall pray to become, through his intercession, a Provincial according to the model he has sketched for us: *Da mihi Domine affabilem esse Minoribus*, etc. I shall recite every day the *O Patriarcha Pauperum*.

"Lastly, I must imitate my Angel Guardian in my care for the brethren, doing them all the good I possibly can, without looking for any return. Every day I shall pray to the angels who guard me, to those of our convents and of our religious, that they may help me to do all the good possible to this Province of France.

"I must lay well to heart those words of St. Paul: *Non quærens quod mihi utile est, sed quod multis* (1 Cor. x. 33). I must not attend to myself except in so far as to make myself a mirror of perfection for others. . . .

"In everything, but especially in difficult matters, confident and fervent prayer will be my light and my greatest help. . . . I thank God and our Blessed Lady for making me feel how incapable I am, and for showing me that henceforth more than ever my life must be one of continual prayer, and a constant aspiration towards Heaven.

"I shall make the monthly Retreat on the first Friday of every month, when I shall do penance also in the refectory. Another resolution will be never to miss a single minute of my prayers through my own fault.

"I shall recommence travelling on foot as far as the duties of my office will allow.

"I place everything in Mary's hands, promising to keep the resolutions of preceding years.

"During this Retreat I have often had to occupy myself with business matters and with writing letters. I have tried not to let this distract me, and I think that God has helped me. I have followed the method of preceding years, commencing with contrition and compunction.

"I began the Retreat after the first Vespers of the Feast *Expectatio Partus* of Our Lady, and I shall finish to-morrow morning after the Mass of St. Stephen. This morning, after my three Masses, it seemed to me that Mary had given birth in me to a new life. Thanks be to God, I feel full of courage to start the struggle once more and carry my cross.

"To-day the Infant Jesus calls the watchful shepherds near Him. I wish to be always near this dear little Shepherd so as to imitate Him, to be merciful like Him; to take upon myself, as He did all His life, whatever is bitter, difficult, and humiliating; so that, as far as it depends on me, my flock may have nothing but sweetness.

"He who has charge of souls must say always: *Nisi Dominus ædificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui ædificant eam.*"

This quotation is long but instructive, for it surely brings out the humility, the distrust of self, and the confidence in God which characterized Father Arsenius. It shows also that he was possessed of those qualities so necessary for a true superior—

viz., a sense of personal insufficiency and a realization of the heavy responsibilities of his office. "I know I do not belong to myself," he wrote from Paris on December 29, "and my duty is to give as good an example as I can. I have started again, as far as my work will allow me, to travel on foot, so as to obtain for us all the spirit of our Father St. Francis."

Whilst completing the visitation of all the houses of the Province after his return from Canada, Father Arsenius received the *Schema*, or draught copy of the new General Constitutions of the Order, which had been drawn up at Rome in view of the proposed union of the four branches of the Franciscan Observants.

The following is taken from his circular letter, dated Paris, January 19, 1896, after he had received the *Schema* of the new constitutions and had concluded his visitation :

"REV. FATHERS AND MOST DEAR BROTHERS,

"I have to bring to your notice an Ordinance of the Most Rev. Father General. I have just received the *Schema* of the General Constitutions for the whole Order of Friars Minor. The Most Rev. Father General earnestly recommends the great cause of union to the individual prayers of all our religious. He, moreover, orders that, in all convents, after Vespers every Wednesday and Saturday till the end of May, the *Tota Pulchra*, the *Salve Sancte Pater*, and the *Si Quæris miracula*, with versicle and prayer, be recited.

"The reception by the whole Order of a single code of laws is obviously an affair of great impor-

tance. Let us pray, then, with humility and with great fervour to the Father of lights, that He may enlighten our minds and incline our hearts to what is most conformable to the divine will. What God wishes will certainly be the most useful and the most opportune for the development, perfection, and honour of the Order.

“The cause, then, of the union of the Order demands our most fervent prayers. But it is not, however, the sole motive we have for redoubling our supplications and doing violence to Heaven. Do not the troubles also through which we are passing in France make prayer for us an imperious duty? What hope have we of escaping ruin if not by prayer? Like the people of Israel, when vowed to destruction by the impious Aman, we, too, should make the earnest supplication of our prayers ascend towards Heaven, doing penance in sackcloth and ashes. Prayer alone will not save us; its wonderful efficacy must be drawn from mortification. I beseech you, then, dear brethren, through the mercy of God to immolate your bodies as a living holocaust, holy and pleasing to the Lord.

“At this very moment we are at that season of the year which our Lord has consecrated by His holy fast, and which was so dear to the first Fathers and Restorers of our Order in France. The Seraphic Patriarch gives a special blessing to those who have the devotion to keep this fast. Ah! yes; may they indeed who keep this holy fast be blessed by the Lord.

“Another penitential exercise very agreeable to God is to travel on foot. Is there need for me, dear

Fathers and brothers, to recall here the example of our Seraphic Father, the example of all our Saints, the example of the Venerable Father Areso? Ah! would that we missionaries realized the blessings that this light penance brings down on us from our Lord. But, in calling to mind the many virtues which this apostolic manner of travelling almost forces us to exercise, who can doubt that Heaven rewards it with many blessings? Without speaking of the edification given to the people, is it not the case that poverty, humility, mortification, and trust in God cannot fail to bear us company? Truly he walks humbly like the poor who has not money to pay for a cab or a railway-ticket; at the same time expenses are saved. The fatigue of the road and many a self-imposed privation must needs be put up with for the love of God. But our Lord does not allow Himself to be outdone in generosity. He fills our souls with heavenly consolations, and grants to us in generous measure the spirit of St. Francis, the spirit of meditation and of prayer.

“I must not pass over in silence another great advantage of travelling on foot. It is that we are obliged to eat of the table of the Lord, to beg our bread, to ask in charity for a night's lodging. Thus we grow accustomed to trust for everything to the bounty of God; we cease to be ashamed of our poverty, mindful that Jesus Christ made Himself poor in this world for our sakes, and has begged His bread before us. Oh, how dear to the Patriarch of the poor was this way of meeting his necessities! How many people, unable to give

money to our syndics, will be happy to aid us by their offerings in kind! How our influence will widen in consequence, for the 'quest' is in fact a most practical way of preaching. It enables us to penetrate everywhere and brings us into direct touch with the people; and I think this truth was certainly present to the mind of St. Francis when he introduced the mendicant idea into his Rule.

"Reverend Fathers and most dear Brothers, I have already had the pleasure of visiting all the convents of our Province, and I wish you to know that the consolation I received throughout was very great. Everywhere is put in practice what I mentioned in my last letter; everywhere is an effort being made to maintain regular observance; everywhere I have met with a truly religious submission to the suggestions I have thought it my duty to give. I thank you from my heart. . . .

"Oh, Father of the poor, St. Francis, can you abandon your children? Are you no longer the support and the leader of the Seraphic army? Ah! be always the loving Father of your humble Friars Minor; be always the vigilant shepherd of your little flock. Your soldiers fight in this valley of tears; show yourself at their head. See you not the tears of your children? Can you remain deaf to their prayers? Can you close your eyes to the dangers of your flock? Hasten then, Father, to our aid.

"Let us labour unceasingly, dear Fathers and Brothers, at the work of our sanctification; let us love one another and live in the peace of the children of God.

"May the blessing of Almighty God, through the intercession of Mary Immaculate and of our Father St. Francis, be with you all! Amen.

"F. A."

In speaking of the "troubles through which we are passing in France," Father Arsenius was alluding to the *loi d'abonnement* which sought to crush out the religious Orders by subjecting them to an unjust and vexatious tax. The majority decided to resist such demands, and the French Observants were among the first to refuse submission.

"The two Chapters," so ran the circular notice of September, 1895, "have decided unanimously and definitely to resist the *loi d'abonnement*. The local Superiors must conform to this resolution, in spite of any special reasons they may have for acting otherwise. They will receive definite instructions in good time. . . . The Bishops have been informed of our decision."

Father Arsenius was fully in accord with this resolution. He wrote from Ascot in November, 1895, to the Mother Abbess of a monastery of Poor Clares: "I am delighted with your resolution (to resist the law) and I congratulate you. You are a worthy child of St. Francis, and I am proud of you. . . . Be sure you are not alone to resist. I do not know a single monastery of Clares which has submitted."

As Provincial, Father Arsenius was a model for his subjects, teaching them not only by his words, but also by his actions. He gave an example of regularity at all the exercises of the day and night,

of charity, mortification, and poverty. His very demeanour, so religious, so austere, was itself a living sermon for the Communities in which he lived or which he visited.

He continued to fast daily, to take the discipline, to make the stations of the Cross in the evening. As for the practice of travelling on foot, which he loved so much and recommended so earnestly, he was as faithful to it as his many occupations and the great distances he had often to go allowed him; but it was not always agreeable, as the following little anecdote shows:

Once in January, 1896, having a few days to spare, he decided to go from Paris to Saint Brieuc via Orleans. His first stage was thirty-two miles. On the second he had to walk till two in the afternoon before finding a church. The Curé, from whom he begged some bread, replied: "You, a religious! don't try and deceive me; you are no more a religious than my boot. I'm a good judge in these matters, as we have all sorts passing by here. You are a rogue." Father Arsenius burst out laughing. "I assure you," he said, "I am a Franciscan, and, what is more, I am the Provincial." "You Provincial," replied the Curé. "Ah! to be sure, an edifying sight to see a Provincial going about on foot and begging his bread! Don't try your tricks on me." At this stage of the argument Father Arsenius produced the seal of the Province and his case of "obediences." After further discussion he was at length admitted to dine with the Curé. The latter, however, was very far from being at his ease during the meal, and was obviously still dubious

about the honesty of his guest. When Father Arsenius was leaving, the good Curé's suspicions seem to have got the better of him again. "You know," he said, showing him out, "I'm no green-horn, you haven't taken me in; you are a mischievous fellow."

When he arrived at Le Mans his feet were bleeding, as the brother shoe-maker had fitted his sandals badly. Here, however, he was more fortunate in his host, for he went for hospitality to the Capuchin Fathers, and was received by them most cordially.

In July, 1896, Father Arsenius assembled all the Superiors of the French houses of his Province, and preached them the annual Retreat with great fervour. Shortly afterwards he did the same for the Superiors in England, who made their Retreat together with the Community at Clevedon.

"Let us take care," he wrote from Amiens, a few days before leaving for England, "not to place any trust in ourselves. We often do so without noticing it. But God sees and dislikes it. Let us, in doing the little He gives us to do, count on no one but Him. We ought to rejoice in seeing and realizing how of ourselves we can do nothing, and to praise God who can do all things, who can even make use of us to do great things, if we only let Him.

"I recommend to you the Retreat I am going to preach at Clevedon to the Superiors in England, and to the Community. I have need of great help, for really I am getting worn out with so many cares."

From Clevedon Father Arsenius went over once more to Canada to visit his religious there, and to

preach the Retreat to the Community at Montreal. No fatigue could hinder him when it was a question of urging souls to strive after perfection.

He wrote from Montreal, September 23, 1896:

"I could not write on board, and when I got here I was confronted with a lot of work. I was not sea-sick during the voyage, though it was very rough and long. We left on September 10, and only arrived on the night of the 21st. One lady died on the way of sea-sickness. I was four days without being able to say Mass, as the weather was too bad."

He did not stop long in Canada. Before the end of October he was crossing back again to Europe. He writes thus during the voyage, October 31, 1896:

"I could not answer your letter at Montreal as I was very busy there. I left on the 24th. My Retreats at Clevedon, at Montreal, and to the Franciscan nuns at Quebec, have all been on the sacrifice of oneself to God. Yes, it is true indeed; there is not much generous energy left in the world. Everywhere it is the same; solid virtue is rare, very rare."

Father Arsenius was so devoted to his religious that he used to pray for them all by name. He drew up a complete list of the members of the Province and read it over every morning before Mass, so that each religious might, as far as possible, enjoy his individual recommendation to God. He had in his Breviary a beautiful prayer written for Superiors in

the Order. It ended with the following words, which are, indeed, so true a description of him :

Da mihi Domine affabilem esse Minoribus et tanta benevolentia præditum ut meo affectui non vereantur se committere delinquentes. Fac, quæso, ut sim moderatus in præceptis, propitius in offensis, feram magis peccatores quam inferam injurias. Hostis sim vitiis, medicus vitiosis; talis sit denique vita mea quæ ceteris fiat spectaculum disciplinæ. Amen.

But Father Arsenius did more than pray for his religious. He was full also of tender solicitude for their happiness and their health. Once he went expressly from Amiens to Paris to console a young student there who had been visited with a great affliction. At another time, when there was small-pox in the Paris Community, he sent all away into the country to recruit their strength, leaving only three Fathers and three brothers in the house. But with himself he was still almost as severe as ever. On one occasion he left Clevedon at four o'clock in the morning and travelled to Amiens, which he did not reach till four in the afternoon, without taking anything except a little coffee before leaving England. In August, 1896, he refused to go to Servières, his native place, to preach a Retreat he had been asked to give there. "It is too far," he wrote, "and would be simply an excuse for a pleasant little outing. Besides, *nemo propheta in patria sua*, said the Master, and I believe it."

In the following year, 1897, Father Arsenius made once more his canonical visitation. The following are some extracts from the circular letter he published on that occasion :

“ ROUBAIX,

“ *May 1, 1897.*

“ The Superiors are the shepherds of the religious entrusted to them. They have undertaken a most formidable charge. It is their duty to watch constantly and to labour with zeal for the sanctification of the flock of Jesus Christ, for which they will have to render a most strict account to the supreme Judge. . . .

“ The first duty of a missionary is to strive after personal sanctification. St. Leonard affirms that the religious who is not conscious in himself of a great love of virtue and a firm resolution to die a thousand deaths rather than commit a deliberate venial sin, should not hazard himself in so responsible a ministry, for what he seems to do for his neighbour's good will only prejudice himself. Consequently the spirit of recollection, the practice of prayer, examinations of conscience, are indispensably necessary if our apostolic labours are not to turn to the shame and detriment of the Order, becoming a source of relaxation for the religious, and no longer a source of edification for the world. . . .

“ Our Lord in His infinite bounty has not wholly rejected the prayers we have offered up to obtain vocations. We must not, however, grow weary in praying; rather let us approach still nearer to the throne of mercy and beg with perseverance for solid and more numerous vocations. Let us not forget to join penance to prayer, for one is of little avail without the other.

“Our missionaries should not be without interest in so important a work. Without doubt it is God who gives the vocation, but does He not make use of man to prepare the heart, to sow there the seeds of this grace as well as of others, and to make it grow? It is for man to discern those who have received the grace of vocation and to help all such to correspond faithfully with it. St. Paul said : *Ego plantavi, Apollo rigavit, Deus autem incrementum dedit*. Why, then, are we not God’s fellow-labourers in this work of vocations ?

“Our Seraphic Colleges, under proper direction, may become true seminaries of good vocations. When a missionary comes across a boy who has a real desire for the Franciscan life, he should make it his duty to examine carefully into his case. If the parents are good Christians, virtuous and respectable, and, as far as one can see, not likely to need their son’s support ; if, besides, the boy himself is seriously minded, pious and intelligent and of good health—these are all signs, indispensable to, and often indicative of, a real vocation. The Seraphic College will finish the work of discernment which must precede any definite decision.

“The news of the union of the four families of the Observants should rejoice your hearts. Pray earnestly whilst waiting for the Constitution, which our glorious Pontiff Leo XIII. is preparing.

“May Mary Immaculate and our Seraphic Patriarch, St. Francis, deign to bless efficaciously our great family, and in particular this Province of France whose prosperity we all desire !

“Let us pray for one another, my dear Fathers

and brothers, and let us live in charity, mutual respect, and peace.

“F. A.”

What as Provincial he recommended to his spiritual children, that he put in practice rigorously himself. He was most zealous for regular observance. His example alone, above all in choir, acted as an exhortation, more eloquent than words could be, to regularity and the practice of religious virtues. Whilst he never ceased to pray and get prayers said for the Province, he occupied himself also in enlightening and encouraging many generous souls who addressed themselves to him.

“There is no question,” he once wrote to such a one, “of a greater or less interchange of letters between us. Once people begin to pray for one another, there is no forgetting; the constant remembrance before God prevents that. As for correspondence, it is quite an accidental, and should be regulated by circumstances and needs.

“The drowsiness of which you speak is due largely, if not entirely, to ill health. You must not be over-troubled about it. Almighty God makes use of sickness to teach us our nothingness and to detach us from many things and from ourselves. All the same, it is none the less a duty for you to look after yourself properly.

“Do not let yourself be troubled by the faithlessness of men. God only is faithful, and will never abandon us in spite of our miseries. Men change

like the wind, and one can trust them only in so far as they lean on God as on an immovable foundation. We must try to raise ourselves above everything which belongs to the earth or which clings to it.

"I pray for you with all my heart. All your trouble will pass away, and as quickly as life itself, which is passing also, thanks be to God. I especially recommend to you three important intentions of mine. I escape from one trouble and difficulty only to fall into another. The life of a Provincial is a regular Calvary, where one is always on the cross. *Fiat voluntas Dei*. What consoles me is the thought that I have already completed more than half my term.

"The Union of the Order is an accomplished fact, for which we must thank God. We are waiting for the Constitution of the Sovereign Pontiff.

"As you see, I am behind time; believe me, it is not my fault. A quantity of work has kept me back these days, and I am not through it yet."

Father Arsenius, when Provincial, was not content with preaching by means of his circular letters, his counsel, and example. He decided, towards the close of the year 1897, to conduct himself the spiritual exercises in all the convents of his Province. At the same time he had several Retreats to preach, especially to many Communities of Poor Clares. For five months, from July to December, he was occupied in this way, besides being busy with the numerous affairs entailed by his office as Provincial. In the course of his travels he happened to pass near Servières, and, after some hesitation, he decided to visit his native place.

"It is very delightful," he wrote to his brother from St. Brieuc, July 21, 1897, "to think of the pleasure I shall have in seeing you all again, and of making the acquaintance of all the little ones I have not yet met."

The visit was not a long one. Father Arsenius only remained one night at Servières. All the family were assembled, and a special supper had been prepared; but even under these circumstances, and at the risk of causing disappointment, Father Arsenius was unwilling to break his habitual and voluntary fast. He took only some vegetables, in spite of many entreaties. The general harmony of the meeting does not, however, seem to have been disturbed. The party was evidently a large one.

"I have seen," he writes after leaving Servières, "my two brothers and my two sisters, a brother-in-law, and a sister-in-law. . . . I met eleven nephews and seven nieces . . . all in excellent health and charming in every way. I think they were all happy to see me, and it was certainly a pleasure for me."

He wrote also to the Superior of the Petit Séminaire :

"It is difficult for you to imagine what a pleasure it was for me to see you once again; to re-visit Servières and those who watch over it. All the old memories came back to me. . . . I need hardly say I do not forget you in my poor prayers. I hope you will be so kind as sometimes to think of me,

your old pupil, before God. I am delighted to see the end of my term of office approaching. I hope I shall be allowed a little rest."

The year 1897 was marked by the union of the four branches of the Franciscan Observants—viz., the Observants proper, the Recollects, the Reformed, and the Alcantarins. On October 4 Pope Leo XIII. published his Bull, *Felicitate quadam*, which re-established unity among the Friars Minor, leaving still untouched and independent the Conventuals and the Capuchins.

Father Arsenius communicated the news to his religious in the following letter :

"REVEREND FATHERS AND MOST DEAR BROTHERS,

"I have the pleasure of presenting to you our new General Constitutions, together with the decree of the Most Rev. Father-General, declaring them obligatory for the whole Order. Receive them in a spirit of great faith and love. Regard them as the manifestation of God's will, and observe them with fidelity, constancy, and perseverance.

"Thank God for the favour which the Holy See has shown us in deigning to occupy itself with our affairs. Let us give ourselves to a holy rejoicing, and let us excite ourselves to the practice of every virtue and to all that is contained in these holy Constitutions, each one according to his state. Thus, according to the exhortation of the Sovereign Pontiff Leo XIII., let us be mindful of the great example of our Seraphic Father, and let us live in

a manner worthy of the state to which we have been called, practising always humility, sweetness, and patience, supporting one another in charity, 'careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

"May Jesus and Mary bless you, keep you from all evil, and lead you to eternal life !

"FATHER A."

"PARIS, October 30, 1897."

A few weeks later Father Arsenius commenced the retreat which was destined to be his last.

"As to my Retreat," he wrote on December 27, 1897, "I thank you very much for all your good prayers. I assure you I do not know if they have produced any effect. . . . I believe in God, I believe in heaven and hell, in the judgment, in the Blessed Eucharist and the Incarnation, in the life, passion, and death of Our Blessed Lord ; but all this makes no more impression on me than a drop of water on a rock. I tell you this to show you that you must not stop praying. Although I am thus insensible, I have a real desire to change; perhaps this is the beginning of conversion."

In another letter of the same date he wrote thus :

"When we are in the midst of troubles we must do as St. Paul, rejoice in them so that the strength of Jesus Christ may dwell in us—*In infirmitatibus meis gloriabor ut inhabitet in me virtus Christi*. Do likewise and all will go well. . . . Sometimes I am very sad, and, if I let myself go, I should find many

more reasons for being sad than you. We are the children of Jesus and Mary. This life will pass away quickly; live then in joy. As we think of eternal life, let us begin also to rejoice with eternal joy."

In a similar strain he wrote also about this time :

"Have you any news of the religious who was ill? After all, happy are the ones who leave us. They are delivered from the great miseries of this world."

After the promulgation of the new Constitutions, Father Arsenius was anxious to consult personally the Minister-General of the Order. He accordingly left for Rome in January, 1898. He had a long audience with the successor of St. Francis, Father Aloysius Lauer, who afterwards spoke of Father Arsenius as a holy and capable religious, and one well versed in all that concerned the legislation of the Order.

After visiting Assisi, the birthplace of the Seraphic Order, and praying in the little chapel of St. Francis, the Portiuncula, Father Arsenius returned to France. Thence business matters summoned him once more to Canada. He passed through England and Clevedon on his way, and sailed from Liverpool on February 26. It was afterwards remarked that, on this his last visit to Clevedon, he consented for the first time to be received solemnly according to the Ritual—a ceremony he had hitherto always dispensed with—and that he was careful that all the Community should be present when he left, in order to say good-bye to all.

The following is an account left us by the Guardian of the house at Montreal :

“When Father Arsenius came here this year for the last time he appeared tired. He said little, but he used often to bury his head in his hands or pass his hands across his forehead. He remarked to me once : ‘It is strange how this multitude of affairs clouds my mind ; I can no longer settle a difficulty as I used to be able to—I need time.’

“Once after singing the High Mass—it was the Feast of St. Joseph, I think—he said to me : ‘I feel weak if I take nothing in the morning. I do not take much, but, little though it is, I find it necessary for me, otherwise I feel empty-headed and have head aches.’

“It was during this Mass, at which I was Assistant priest, that I was quite astonished to notice him trembling all over at the beginning of the Canon. Looking up into his face to see if he was unwell, I realized that he was absorbed in the prayers of the Mass, and that his trembling was due to the emotions of faith and devotion to which the great act he was performing gave rise. A Father once heard him say that he had never grown accustomed to saying Mass.

“He came to Canada at the advice of the General. Doubtless, also, God wished that his numerous friends here and our benefactors should have an opportunity of seeing him once more before his death. However, it was all fatiguing work, for even during the voyages he made, he generally spent his time in study, remaining often almost continually in his cabin, except for meals, and seldom

going out into the fresh air. This time he brought with him the whole of Haine's *Moral Theology*, which I feel sure he studied throughout.

"At Matins, most of all, one could see how tired he was. He did not come often, not because he did not wish to, but because he was not called. He complained that the 'knocker up' did not wake him, but I took good care he was not aroused, seeing how tired he was.

"I am told that during his first stay here Father Arsenius frequently, if not always, went out in winter barefoot and bareheaded. I think it was thus he must have contracted that general weakness which obliged him to leave here after the winter and return to France, though he did not realize it himself. For others, however, at least since I came here, he was most considerate. He gave me all sorts of recommendations for the winter. This time, when he came, the winter was almost over, although there was still plenty of snow and frost.

"On one occasion we went to Quebec together and I provided him, of course, with boots. When we reached the convent of Franciscan nuns, we took them off. A nun afterwards put them aside so that, when we wanted to leave, we could not find them. We started off, however, all the same. In many places the road was clean enough and bearable in consequence, but in others we had to walk through melting snow. Personally I was much put out, and reproached myself, as I followed in the good Father's steps, for not having insisted on finding our boots. However, I said nothing, not wishing to seem less brave than he, and contented myself with picking my way carefully, and avoiding

the deep parts. Father Arsenius, however, walked straight ahead without taking notice of anything, and seemingly insensible to any discomfort. He had a cold as the result, but soon got over it.

“At Quebec Father Arsenius, in the midst of all his other occupations, preached a little Retreat to the nuns. It seemed that his great wish up to the end was to communicate to others the love of God which burned in his own breast. He preached at the Profession which followed this three days’ Retreat. He had originally suggested that I should preach because he was so fatigued, but I remarked that, since he was not going to receive the vows, which the Vicar-General was to do, it was more fitting that he rather than I should take at least some part in the ceremony. On this he consented to speak, though want of time and energy had prevented him from preparing. His address was short and simple, but so impressive were his words that the Vicar-General was quite overcome with emotion. . . .

“When the Seraphic College was being built, Mrs. Mac-Konkey wished to offer £1,000 in order to endow it with a bursary. She communicated her intention to the Syndic of the convent, who spoke of it to Father Arsenius. The latter begged the Syndic to use all his influence to dissuade the generous benefactress from carrying out her wishes. Any other way of helping on the work would, he declared, be most acceptable, but he wished the future of both college and convent to be entirely in the hands of Providence.

“Our Syndic wished to have Father Arsenius photographed before he left Canada, but in spite of his entreaties and arguments, he could not obtain

his consent. At one time Father Arsenius would say, 'Not before I am dead.' At another, 'If my successor orders me.'"*

Father Arsenius left Montreal on March 28, 1898, bareheaded and barefoot, in spite of the cold which was still severe. He travelled in company with two Cistercian Abbots who were journeying from Canada to Rome. The party reached New York on the 29th, and sailed thence on the ill-fated liner *La Bourgoyne*. The crossing was excellent, and every morning it was possible to say Mass. They arrived at the convent at Paris at half-past eight on Holy Thursday evening, April 7.

Father Arsenius seemed worn out. He took supper with the two Cistercians, and afterwards accompanied them to their rooms, carrying up their bags for them. He then went to his own cell, laid the portable altar he had used on board ship at the foot of the bed, and retired to rest.

In the draft-copy of his last circular letter, speaking of the death of one of his religious, Father Arsenius had written: "He has gone before us, but we shall follow him soon." During his last retreat, as we see from his notes, the thought of the nearness of death was constantly before him. The summons he was so soon to hear himself cannot then have found him unprepared.

* It appears that Father Arsenius was never photographed except once or twice in a group, but that once a snapshot was taken of him, which was subsequently enlarged, and a copy of which forms the frontispiece of this book.

CONCLUSION

THE following morning, Good Friday, since Father Arsenius did not appear, someone went to his cell to call him. He was found unconscious, lying with closed eyes and deadly pale. The doctors who were hastily summoned declared his condition to be due to congestion of the brain. The religious were naturally filled with dismay. Everything possible was done for the dying man, but he never recovered consciousness. On Saturday night the agony began, and on Easter Sunday morning, April 10, at half-past ten, he died.

On account of the Easter solemnities the body was not exposed in the Church. The funeral, simple and humble as Father Arsenius would have wished it to be, took place on the Tuesday. His body lies in the cemetery of Montrouge, in the Community vault.

In personal appearance Father Arsenius was tall and thin, yet his constitution was strong. His face smiling, yet ascetic, his thin features, his quick, deep-set eyes, which used to fill with an expression of joy when he prayed, all revealed the type of man he was. His death at so early an age caused general grief and astonishment. Loud were the expressions of

esteem and regret among all who had known him—in France, in England, especially at Clevedon, and in Canada. Of the many obituary notices which appeared, the following which the French Capuchin Fathers inserted in their Annals of the Third Order is one of the most sympathetic, and with it we may well conclude :

“The Friars Minor of the Rue des Fourneaux,” it runs, “have just suffered a severe loss in the death of the Very Rev. Father Arsenius-Mary, Provincial.

“No one anticipated so sudden and sad an end. The Very Rev. Father had just returned from Canada, where he had been performing, with most edifying zeal, the important duty of canonical visitation. He had been able to preach the Retreat to all the Communities of his Province, and his words, aided by the example of a most exalted virtue, left on all a profound impression.

“It seemed he was about to enjoy the fruits of his efforts to maintain everywhere intact the perfection of the religious life. But alas! God, whose designs are impenetrable, judged that his life, short though it was, had yet been well filled. In the full vigour of youth He summoned to Himself His faithful servant.

“On Good Friday the Very Rev. Father Arsenius - Mary fell into a profound lethargy. Though never regaining consciousness, he received, nevertheless, the last Sacraments; and on Easter Sunday, at the age of thirty-nine, he went to the God of all life and of all holiness, Whom he had loved so much.

"All those who have known this eminent religious will realize how immense and irreparable is the loss sustained by our dearly loved brethren.

"With a cultivated intelligence and a soul open to great and noble aspirations, he was of the number of those who can render real service to the cause of religion. He loved his Order with a true and intelligent devotion. In him the Seraphic virtues shone brightly forth. Humility, charity, the spirit of poverty and mortification, impressed upon his very countenance the undeniable stamp of sanctity.

"We recommend this dear soul most earnestly to all the children of St. Francis. We shall pray for him and, above all, for his spiritual sons, asking to be allowed to help them in the terrible loss they have just sustained.

"We, Capuchin Friars Minor, shall never forget the truly paternal kindness which the Very Rev. Father Arsenius-Mary always showed us. Neither shall we forget that he was one of those who, best of all, have understood the necessity for a cordial union between all the branches of the Order."

APPENDIX

SPIRITUAL LETTERS AND NOTES DURING RETREATS

LETTERS

I. ON UNION WITH GOD, THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE, AND THE LOVE OF SOULS. *"October, 1890.*

"UNION consists in love, and although there may be no feeling of union, it does not follow that the union itself does not exist. I know that the bride has need of the Bridegroom, and I can assure you that the Bridegroom is faithful. What God does is done for all time. All that is necessary is that we should allow Him to act freely in our regard. Be happy that you are passing through the furnace, and realize that you are best off when you have no feelings of sensible devotion. Learn how to profit by this dereliction, and renounce completely everything that is not Jesus. My own opinion is that nothing is better than the Cross and the thorns without any consolation. All consolations and sweetness are liable to occasion delusions, and there is the danger of growing attached to them. It is not thus with the Cross; here there is nothing to fear. It is the tree of life, and its fruits are always the fruits of life. Those who have gone before us, seeing how Jesus Christ suffered always until His death in ignominy, have well understood that true perfection consists in the entire abnegation of ourselves, and of all that is not Jesus and the Cross of Jesus. We must walk in their footsteps, desiring only suffering, shame, and the Cross in all its forms. We must crush out

and sacrifice every desire which is not directed towards Jesus. He loved the Cross and regarded it with divine complaisance, and His friends also love it, this dear spouse of His Heart, with unbounded devotion. Let us go, then, to Calvary with a lively faith, and a love that looks for no consolations. I love speaking of these things with you because I know you understand them.

“How sad it is that there are so few generous souls! All look to their own interests, and seek for consolations and special favours. They do not understand that the most precious jewel in the treasures of the Well-Beloved is His dear Cross, with its contempt, its calumny, and its shame. As for us, let us realize that we must leave all for Jesus—our life, our reputation, our honour, even spiritual advantages; and we must wish to know nothing but Jesus and Jesus crucified, to possess nothing but Jesus and Jesus stripped and despoiled. Keep close to Him, dear daughter. It is solitary, indeed, this hill of Calvary. To-day, above all, where are they who profess to know nothing but the folly of the Cross? Let us love Jesus, who loves us so much, so that we may become like to Him and have all things in common with Him—prayers, sufferings, and merits. Be one with Him, and then we shall certainly have everything in common with Him.

“Love souls also. Oh, He loves them, this dear good Master! He died for them, and He would be ready, if it were possible, to die again and to immolate Himself every day for them. Since we are the friends, and more than the friends, of Jesus, should we not have the same sentiments regarding souls as Jesus has? Let us embrace, then, these dear souls, and try to warm them with our charity. Do not be troubled if you are without joy; joy is not for earth, but for our eternal home. Renounce, then, all joy and all sensible pleasure. Souls are spiritual, and union between them is only possible when they are freed from attachment to the things of sense, for such attachment hinders union.

“Just as the waters of many rivers which meet and mingle on their way to the ocean are thereby strengthened to throw down the obstacles that block their way, so also souls which are united in God are made stronger in their approach to Him.

“I fancy this is all clear enough. I bless you from my heart.”

2. ON HEALTH.

To a Nun.

“DEAR CHILD,

“LE PUY,
“April 2, 1891.

“Here is my answer and what I have always thought : Be indifferent to health or sickness. However, since health is necessary for observing the holy Rule which you have embraced, ask Almighty God that His holy will may be done in this matter. I do not regard it as presumption to think that God has accepted your sacrifice ; but neither is it a going back on your word to ask for health in the way I have just shown you.

“God, who is Goodness itself, can give health to that priest and to you also, if such is according to His designs, and without impoverishing Himself. Do you remember the priest who offered to sacrifice his second eye if he might be allowed to look again upon our Blessed Mother ? She gave him both back, and let him see her again as well. Do you not think we can be outspoken with God when we ask for grace to do His holy will ?

“Let us love God, the Father who is so good to us, with our whole heart. Let us love Jesus, and let us never forget our dear Mother.”

3. SHORT TREATISE ON THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

To a Community of Nuns.

“MY VERY DEAR DAUGHTERS,

“LE PUY,
“June 7, 1891.

“For a long time I have been waiting for an opportunity to write you a few lines. Mother Vicareess, in a letter she wrote me more than a month ago, asked for a ‘little letter,’ but your good Reverend Mother added a note of her own saying that what was wanted was not a little but a ‘long letter,’ as her children were famished. I shall try to satisfy both by making my letter short in words, but very long in meaning, thus putting in practice the admonition of the great Apostle who tried to satisfy all. Let me get to work, then.

“You know, dear daughters, my wish concerning you is

that you should become saints, but not after the fashion of the Pharisees, who content themselves with washing and purifying the exterior, but who within are full of iniquity—*i.e.*, of pride and self-love, taking from God what belongs to Him. You must, of course, be well regulated outwardly, in manner, words, and actions; but it is above all by inward purity and love of God that you must be saints. You will attain to this by perfect correspondence with grace, leaving it free to act in your souls without any hindrance. The greatest obstacles you can raise to the workings of grace are ill-regulated self-love, ill-ordered love of creatures, the tendency to satisfy the sensual appetites, pride, vainglory; a certain sourness of temper, leading to uncharitableness; impatience with, and contempt for, others; attachment to one's own opinions, will, and spiritual lights. Then among some, an immoderate desire for knowledge, reasoning instead of seeking for devotion and fervour in what they read; in many nuns also, who neglect the inner life, an inconstancy and flippancy of mind, and the evil habit of doing all their actions mechanically and tepidly. Here is work enough to keep us busy for a long time. I call it 'the destruction of Carthage'—*i.e.*, of our corrupt nature.

"I am somewhat like the Roman senator of old. When nuns whom I find to be full of pride and self-love, seeking in the Sacraments simply the gratification of their vanity, slow to obey in whatever displeases and annoys them, hardly ever mortifying themselves, and seeking as much as possible their own ease and convenience—when such as these speak to me of their desire for perfection, or reveal to me their consolations and fervent sighs—in a word, what they take for sanctity—I am tempted to laugh at such folly, were it not that the sight of poor souls plunged thus in illusion is something rather to make one weep, and fills me with pity. Of course, I simply say to them: 'That is all very fine; but first of all you must destroy Carthage, which is your corrupt nature, and which is the formidable rival of Rome—*i.e.*, the city of God represented by grace.

"Here, then, is a big work, my poor children, and confronting all of you, I suppose, in one degree or another. But should we stop here? It would be advisable perhaps in some ways, because many, who ought indeed to go as yet no farther, will skip over all I have just said, and only busy

themselves with what follows—so much the worse for them. However, I must not, on their account, neglect to say something to those who have almost demolished their Carthage, for these are my favourite children, and to them also I am anxious to give bread and wine and other delicacies.

“Here are the means which contribute most to our advancement : recollection, or the practice of the interior life ; detachment from creatures ; self-renunciation ; the spirit of gentleness ; attention to conform to the holy will of God.

“Now, for the most advanced of all, some points of perfection which will lead them to a high degree of sanctity : cling to nothing ; love the spirit of abandonment ; suffer in silence ; have no preferences ; espouse the Cross—that is to say, love suffering so much as not to be able to live without it ; love and desire contempt ; have a great devotion to Mary. Such are what I call delicacies in the spiritual life. I know well enough that those whose hearts are full of themselves and of creatures will not relish them ; but I know also that there are some who understand me, and such are my children of predilection.

“Although I have given you all enough work for the rest of your lives, I wish to finish my paper, so I shall add some secret little ways which lead very soon to perfection : maintain a firm and constant resolution to avoid everything likely to withdraw you, even in the very slightest degree, from aspiring to perfection ; do not content yourselves with general resolutions, but descend to particulars for the correction of faults ; lay stress on little things, whether helps or hindrances to virtue ; submit to the direction of some servant of God with entire obedience ; cultivate devotion to the Queen of Heaven ; be careful, above all, to ‘abandon’ yourselves entirely to the guidance of Providence.

“A few points essential to a fervent soul anxious to attain perfection : to keep oneself continually in the spirit of prayer, and to tolerate nothing which weakens this disposition ; to mortify oneself continually and in everything—*i.e.*, never to allow any occasion of mortification to pass by ; to be zealous in the matter of penance, allowing no day to pass without some bodily infliction ; to be resolved to satisfy all one’s obligations ; to accustom oneself to speak always of God or of what concerns His service ; from morning till night to think only of what can procure the glory of God.

"A few holy practices : never satisfy nature completely, but always refuse it a part of what it wants ; detach the heart from everything, and concentrate yourself upon your work, not for its own sake, as being possibly what you like, but for God's sake, who commands it. Place yourself continually in the hands of God in all that happens ; do not rely upon creatures ; do the will of others rather than your own ; as far as it rests with you, leave what is easy and choose what is difficult.

"I do not wish you to think that you cannot all, without exception, arrive at the highest point of perfection treated of in this letter, if you wish to. Many will find me too dry. . . .

"Pardon my scrawl, but I write to you, lying on my straw mattress. Blessed be God ! It only remains for me, my daughters, to bless you, which I do.

"Your servant."

4. TO A NUN, ON TAKING THE HABIT.

"October 7, 1891.

"DEAR CHILD,

"I thank you very much for your kind letter, and I bless God, who, after having led you into this holy house, grants you to find there what your heart desires. It is for you now to show yourself generous, and to correspond with the grace which has been given you. It is beyond all question that the religious life is one of sacrifice—in fact, it is that alone. When you place your foot on the threshold of the cloister, you must leave behind you all that is not God, for in a religious house one must renounce everything—even oneself. Our Lord says expressly : 'Unless a man renounce everything he possesses, he cannot be My disciple. If, then, you wish to follow Me, renounce yourself, and every day carry your cross after Me'; and I feel sure that if many nuns find the yoke of religion heavy, it is because they have not understood these words of the Divine Master. They are astonished when they are told that it is necessary to leave everything and to renounce oneself.

"For you, dear child, I wish you to understand this and to put it in practice from the beginning. If you set yourself to it generously and resolutely for the love of God, you will enjoy peace and happiness. Otherwise you will be un-

happy and will not persevere. However, I know the good nuns will teach you this way of sacrifice, which is the way of happiness. . . .

"Do not rest content with externals; your habit must above all be interior. You must put on the Lord Jesus Christ—at least, you must begin to do so. You will not be entirely clothed in Him till you have entirely despoiled yourself of yourself.

"Be courageous and generous. I pray for you, dear child, and every day offer you up to God in the Holy Sacrifice."

5. ON SOLID PIETY IN SPITE OF SPIRITUAL TRIALS.

"CLEVEDON,
"October, 1891.

"MY DEAR DAUGHTER,

"Believe me, I am just in the same position as you with regard to the feeling of devotion. We must serve God and adore Him in spirit and in truth—*i.e.*, we must always have a good will to please Him and to accomplish with a pure intention what He asks of us, until it may please Him to dispose of things otherwise. Let us be firm in the service of God in spite of every obstacle. I recommend to you these words: *Labora sicut bonus miles Christi Jesu*. A tried and brave soldier does not look for delicacies, but solid plain bread. Even if it is hard, no matter; he can crush it between his teeth. . . .

"Ah, how bitter is life, and what need we have to look often towards Heaven! But let us be courageous in spite of adverse fortune, and rejoice that for us there is no living without the Cross. In a few years all will be finished, and then comes the eternal reward—union with Jesus and the company of His blessed Mother.

"Believe me, I am far from living in ease; but I am happy all the same, and if I tell you this, it is to make things clearer for you, for I repeat, we must pay no attention to the exterior; we must set aside the form, and regard only the substance of things, remembering that our union with God is purely spiritual, and is founded on the annihilation of self.

"Courage, dear daughter! Let us despoil ourselves of everything that is not Jesus and His love."

6. ON ABANDONMENT TO THE WILL OF GOD.

"CLEVEDON,

"January 18, 1892.

"I am happy to learn that you can attend once more to your children, but what gives me pleasure above all is to learn that you have begun to practise joyfully the spirit of abandonment. After all, what use is there in doing otherwise? You know that we cannot change what God disposes for us. Whether or not we realize His share in all that happens to us, it is all the same—we can change nothing. All we have to do, since detachment is always necessary for us, is to be indifferent to everything, in such a way as not to attribute to ourselves what we have not, but to remain united to God, who will preserve us with what we have. For myself, I only desire what God has prepared for me, and similarly for you I wish simply that God's will may be done in you. It would be intolerable presumption to act otherwise. I perform with joy all He asks of me. How profitable it is to cut off without pity all that is not Jesus!

"I see more and more clearly that your whole life must be passed in detaching yourself from creatures. But you must not think that I lay much stress on exterior detachment, for I know it to be insignificant when compared with interior detachment, though of course it must not be neglected. You should aim at being voluntarily ignorant of the dispositions God may take concerning you. The great thing is that He should do what He likes with us, and that we should not trouble ourselves by trying to understand everything. Let us rest entirely tranquil in the hands of God, and not try to remember anything except Him or what He Himself may recall to us. Here is an ignorance which is learned indeed, and embodies a very lofty philosophy.

"For my part, I live tranquil, abandoned in God. All the same, I think I may say that God uses me to do some little good, though I am not without contradictions. These contradictions, however, trouble me much less than they used to, and do not in any way destroy my peace. *Deo gratias!* How absolute is the detachment God demands from those who wish to serve Him! We can only attain to it by the help of His grace. This help is promised to

us ; it depends, then, absolutely on ourselves if we are to reach this entire detachment.

“ Pray for our novices, the religious, and our boys here.

“ I bless you.”

7. ON THE VOW OF ABANDONMENT.

“ I bless God for having called you by the way of abandonment, and it will be a great pleasure for me if I can help you to practise your vow. It is beyond all question the quickest way of attaining to sanctity. This is easy to understand, for who of us knows exactly the degree of perfection to which he is called ? Obviously God only knows this ; He alone knows that ideal of perfection which each one of us should aim at realizing in our own souls. Of ourselves we can neither know it nor reach it ; only God can enable us to do this. He, then, is best advised who leaves God to do the work within him, who allows himself to be shaken, smoothed down, and polished by the external trials and sufferings which God sends him and imposes upon him. After all, it is not we who sanctify ourselves, but God who sanctifies us. You say in your letter : ‘ I have now but one desire—to leave Jesus complete freedom in my soul, to allow Him to reign there without any constraint, to accomplish in everything His divine good pleasure, cost what it may.’ These are certainly the dispositions which every soul should have which enters the path of abandonment. The whole thing simply consists in making no restrictions, and in advancing always with as much generosity as our human nature is capable of.

“ Is there not something grand in this entire abandonment ? How few there are who understand how much sacrifice and self-forgetfulness it demands ! True abandonment means the crushing out of self. It is an immolation, a perpetual sacrifice offered, not by the soul, but by Jesus, who possesses the soul. Thus we may sum up abandonment in these words : Allow Jesus to act in you without any restraint. There are many souls who wish to do as Jesus desires, who wish to glorify Jesus ; but how many does one find who are truly disposed to leave Jesus free to glorify Himself in them, and to do with them as He wishes ?

"But I see I am forgetting myself; let me answer your questions. First, as to mortification: True mortification is interior, and consists in destroying in the soul all that is not Jesus. But if such mortification absorbs you so much as to distract you, it is better to set all these thoughts aside and remain quietly prepared to do what you discover to be the good pleasure of Jesus. Once this is grasped, it is quite certain that, according to the principles of the spiritual life (I am speaking of cases where obedience leaves us free in the matter), if you are in doubt as to whether Jesus demands this thing or that from you, you should choose always what is the more humiliating, the more crucifying, the more destructive of self-love, for perfection is always with the Cross. This is a hard saying, and not to everyone's taste; it is something for saints. But what is the value of that rose-water piety which caresses self-love, self-will, self-satisfaction, contenting itself with devotional sayings and empty phrases?

"Take care not to injure your health, not to open the way to scruples, not to do anything exaggerated and likely to draw down ridicule. I like to see a soul walking in this way of little sacrifices, so accustoming itself to mortification that it becomes almost second nature, entailing a real need to be never without some kind of suffering, though never, as far as possible, of a noticeable kind. But, let me repeat, all this must be done calmly, without disturbing interior peace; without distracting the soul from the thought of Jesus, from the desire and love of Him, from the determination to do His will.

"Secondly, you must arrange to get enough sleep, to enable you to say Matins well, and to fulfil all the duties of the following day. The first obligation of 'abandonment' is to fulfil all your duties. If, in spite of your precautions, and without seeking anything delicate, you cannot sleep, then this is a case for abandoning yourself to God and blessing Him for presenting you clearly with the Cross. I do not wish to say that to take ordinary precautions for preserving health and strength to perform one's obligations is to be unfaithful to the spirit of abandonment; on the contrary, this is a case of ordinary prudence, and by so acting—without troubling to know what may be the result—we shall be doing God's will. It is the same in cases

of illness : 'abandonment' does not mean that we must refuse to be nursed, but that, while taking the ordinary precautions, according to obedience, we should be indifferent as to whether we recover or not.

"Thirdly, if you wish to stifle natural inclinations, do not ask for anything particular in your prayers ; do not ask to attain to such or such a degree of perfection, do not ask for contempt or any special humiliations, but beg Our Lord Jesus Christ to grant you all the humiliations, sufferings, and contempt which He has in store for you if you show yourself faithful. Thus there will be no fear of self-love. The truth is that to practise properly the vow of 'abandonment' it is necessary to die to the world and to self, and to allow Our Lord Jesus Christ alone to live in us. So, if you are not dead yet, hasten to give the last blow and to die, for the end of the vow of 'abandonment' is none other than to make Jesus live in us, and Jesus alone, so as to be able to say, 'I live: now not I, but Christ liveth in me.'

"I do not know if I have succeeded in enlightening you. I pray God I have. May He Himself give you the light and strength to do what He wishes of you, and to be always passive in His hands!

"I pray for you ; pray for me."

8. ON SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP.

To a Person in the World.

"I need hardly tell you that only those friendships which lead to God are permitted to souls aiming at perfection. Your friendship is of this sort if it causes you no care distracting you from the service of God or your neighbour or from your other duties ; when the presence or absence of your friend is a matter of indifference to you, or rather if the sight and remembrance of your friend stimulates you to greater detachment from the world and greater fervour in the service of God.

"Such truly spiritual friendships are very rare, a great grace from God, and they suppose an already high degree of perfection. The souls that enjoy them are always alert to keep their hearts detached from creatures ; they hold their hearts in their hands so as to preserve them in constant union with the Heart of the Divine Master, to whom

they belong without reserve. There is no fear of their becoming attached to others. They would rather see everything perish than give one fibre of their heart to creatures. Such souls love nothing in itself, but only in God, for God's sake, and because of God; they love nothing apart from God. In other words, they love God only, and nothing outside of Him, and themselves only because they are His. It is a very sublime state, which perhaps I do not explain very clearly, though God gives me the grace to understand it. In such friendships as these the external beauty of the body plays no part at all; it is only the soul which loves.

"Believe me, such friendships are most rare, and granted only to the very spiritual. Beginners must not aspire to them, but must be content to circumcise their hearts continually. Only the very generous can reach them, those who are full of courage, who are ready to sacrifice everything, who never stop to bargain with God. Souls not yet entirely detached should not permit themselves any liberties in this respect, for it is always dangerous. They become attached without noticing it, and then comes the struggle. They will lose their time, and, serious though this is, it will be the least of their difficulties.

"The only way of getting out of this veritable labyrinth is to resolve to forget oneself entirely, without reserve, without condition, thinking only how one may best empty one's heart of creatures and fill it with God. The sacrifice must be complete; nothing must be kept back. This remedy is a bitter one, indeed, but the only one, and absolutely necessary. Without it, not a step forward, not a moment of peace; and, though much may be suffered and much work done, very little merit is acquired. Sufferings and work alike are valueless, because the motive and the end are both earthly. How miserable, then, it is to lose so much, and all for nothing! For what indeed is gained? In this life a certain satisfaction, yet not free from remorse, entirely low and sensual, and then everything lost for all eternity. On the other hand, he who gives his affections to whom they properly belong by the most sacred right and the clearest and most explicit command—such a one not only always enjoys God, but also all creatures in God. What course, then, does common sense dictate?

"Believe me, leave all and you will find all. Have the

courage to abandon creatures, and you will find God, who is all. *Deus meus et omnia.* Why do you wait? You must die to earth and live to heaven. You have lost enough already. Every moment of our life is given us to love God, and nothing but God, with our whole heart, our whole soul, and all our strength. All the rest we love in loving God, and because we love God."

9. ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

Letter to a Nun.

"December, 1893.

"For you, do as the inspirations of grace allow you, careful always to keep your heart in your hands, so as to see that it belongs to your Divine Spouse alone. You must admit no affection that does not flow from your love of Jesus. I mean to say that you must not love Jesus *and* someone else as well, thereby giving away a part of your affections and reserving the rest for the Divine Spouse. If you love anyone, it must be on account of Jesus, for Jesus, and in Jesus; that is to say, others should be loved only in so far as they find a place in the Heart of the Divine Master, whom you ought to love wholly and above all, and His friends simply because they are His friends. Again, you should love all men because they have within them the image of God, however defaced. It is enough that the image can be repaired, and for this you should pray. With such purity of intention as this, which regards, not the creature, but solely the Creator, everything is allowed. But, as long as we are here below, we must always be on the watch, lest anything should find its way into our hearts which might sully this purity. It is in this sense that I say to you, Do as the inspirations of grace allow you."

10. ON SPIRITUAL DRYNESS AND PEACE OF HEART.

"MY DEAR DAUGHTER,

"Why do you distress yourself thus? Sensible affections are not necessary for faith nor for virtue. Sentiment is something which God gives when He wishes, but which does not increase merit. One act of faith made in the greatest dryness, in the most utter desolation, is of more value than a thousand made in the midst of consolations

and sensible devotion. How can you think of saying that the good God is too far away from you? Has He not said Himself: *Cum ipso sum in tribulatione, eripiam eum et glorificabo eum?* For whom were these words uttered, if not for you? Do you no longer call God your Father? And if He is your Father, is He not also infinitely good? To fulfil your duties, it is not reason that is at hand to help you; it is faith, hope, and charity. Come, my dear child, you are in the crucible; you must certainly abandon yourself and remain passive, but you must try also to live content and to say to Our Divine Lord: 'Cost what it may, crucify me as Thou wilt, do with me what Thou wilt, but I wish to repeat again and again that I love Thee as much as I am able. I believe in Thee, I place all my trust in Thee; and if Thou shouldst kill me, yet would I wish only for Thee. Nay more, wert Thou even to condemn me to hell, yet would I serve Thee at my best, and with all my remaining powers.'

"And why are you afraid, dear child, to trouble me in telling me all your trials? It is true I suffer to see you in pain, but I am consoled when you open your heart to me. It is a great mistake to think it better to keep silence when there are only troubles to speak about; this is just what the devil wants you to do, and you would only make things easier for him if you did so, for if you shut your heart to others he will contrive to work his way in and become master there. . . .

"Take things at the very worst, if you like, and suppose that all your life you have done nothing for God. What, even then, is the use of being dispirited? It is simply losing the time God is giving you that you may repair what has been lost, making that loss still greater under pretext of lamenting it.* Look at the darkest side of things if you wish, but be of good courage all the same. Despise yourself, humble yourself, recognize that of ourselves we can do no good, and then say to your Heavenly Father, the Father of Mercies: "O my Father, Thou art my Father indeed, and a Father

* This of course must not be taken to imply that regret for past failures serves only to increase the loss already sustained. On the contrary, regret is often the beginning of reparation. What is blamed is the tendency to allow useless lamentation to take the place sometimes of energetic resolution.—TRANSLATOR.

of mercy ; but I am nought but misery, incapable of any good, but capable of every evil. Is it strange, then, that I have not served Thee ? Is it strange that I have wasted my time ? Is it strange that I have done nothing good ? Ah ! Lord, I wish now to be wholly Thine ; have pity upon me, although it is only Thy anger which I deserve. But to whom wilt Thou show mercy, if not to the most wretched of Thy children ?'

"This, then, is how you must act with regard both to the present and to the past. I do not wish you to occupy yourself about them, except in so far as to leave everything in the hands of God's Providence. As for the present, I do not think it reasonable at all to torture yourself so much when you approach God, seeing how kind He is, inviting us so lovingly to draw near to Him and to repose in Him. Every time it is allowed you, go freely to the Divine Master. Show Him all the affection you can, though always with respect. When such devotion is not granted you, humble yourself and be guided by duty. We have not always sensible devotion, but when God gives it we must make use of it, though without growing attached to it. We must look upon it as a sort of spiritual cake, such as we give to children to encourage them.

"Love God with all the strength of your soul. I shall help you as far as ever I can."

II. ON THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE.

"June, 1894.

"Love and sacrifice are never separated. A soul which thinks it can love, but without being willing to sacrifice itself, is blind indeed, and completely deceived by the 'father of lies.' The thirst for sacrifice is the touchstone of sanctity. The measure of sanctity is the love of sacrifice and a passion, greater or less, for the Cross. Thus, when a soul pretends to have revelations and consolations, it is easy to find out if these are really given by God or are mere fictions of the imagination ; one has only to see if such a soul clings most of all to obedience, to duty, and to self-renunciation."

12. ON THE HAPPINESS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.

To a Nun.

"ROUBAIX,

"May 2, 1897.

"Your letter gave me great pleasure; in haste, then, a few words of reply. Obstacles are only insurmountable when we have not fully decided to give ourselves unreservedly to God. Do not imagine, then, my child, that you are not going to succeed; no, you will advance when you wish to. The grace of Jesus makes us invincible, and to have this grace we have only to ask for it—to ask for it every day, and many times every day. Take the word of those confessors who have experience of souls both in the cloister and in the world.

"There is more to suffer in the world than in the cloister, without taking into account the greater difficulty those in the world have of saving their souls. I have written a whole Retreat to show how religious should give themselves to God without reserve if they wish to enjoy peace, happiness, consolations, the moral certainty of salvation. All or almost all their sufferings spring from the fact that they do not make a complete sacrifice; they always keep something back, cherish some secret idol; in a word, they do not give themselves up entirely to God.

"Come, then, muster up a little courage! Forget everything else, and remember only those words of Jesus: 'Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead.' You should have no regrets for the past.

"Take this answer, then, my dear child; I think you will understand it. Think no more of Miss —, but change it completely into Sister Mary —. Give yourself wholly to Jesus, and I assure you you will be happy, immensely happy, even in the midst of tribulation and under the heavy weight of the Cross.

"I pray for you, dear child, with all my heart. We Father Confessors always seem a little stern in what we say, but, believe me, he who writes to you is most interested in your welfare."

13. ON A RELIGIOUS PROFESSION.

*To a Nun.**"October 27, 1897.*

"You must, I am afraid, have given up all hopes of receiving a line from me on the occasion of your profession. I have not forgotten you before Jesus and Mary, but I have little time for writing. However, just a word.

"Well, you are consecrated now to Jesus. United to Him by the ties of union the holiest one can conceive of, you have become the spouse of the King of Kings. Do not forget, my child, the obligations of this noble dignity. You have been raised to a sublime height; it remains for you to live in a manner worthy of God. You will not succeed in this except by a complete abnegation of yourself and of your will, and a resolution to accomplish solely the adorable will of God. This must be done by means of continual prayer, which is called the spirit of prayer, by silence, and by recollection. All this supposes a constant mortification of the senses, of your ease and your tastes, and a perfect obedience.

"I pray Jesus and His Blessed Mother to grant you all this, and I bless you from my heart."

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NOTES

FATHER ARSENIUS left two copy-books, 106 pages in all, of closely written notes made during his retreats, commencing in 1882 and finishing with his last retreat in December, 1897. It is from these notes that the following extracts are taken:

I. ON THE MANNER OF DIRECTING SOULS.

"To labour for souls is a most sublime mission, and altogether beyond our capacity. But when God lays it upon us He gives us all that is necessary to discharge it properly. Nevertheless, we must every day ask for His co-operation, remembering always those words: *Sine me*

nihil potestis facere ; and again : *Sufficientia nostra ex Deo est*. We must not put ourselves forward, but allow full scope to the workings of the Spirit of Jesus.

“ There is no pride in the thought that the spiritual life of inferiors depends in part on that of their superiors and directors. This is a truth borne out by Holy Scripture. But it is certain also that, in spite of all the efforts of superiors, there are many souls who are lost through their own fault and by abusing their liberty. Conclusion : Watch and pray with great earnestness and humility, but without losing peace.

“ Be always both firm and gentle, but never harsh ; never turn away or discourage the weak. Never forget that we must always act with peace and charity if we wish to be God’s instruments. Trouble within, bitterness towards one’s brethren, are great obstacles to the reception of divine light and to the workings of grace. Pay attention to this.

“ Apostolic men should not forget to unite great firmness with kindness. They must remember that they do not belong to the world, but that, being chosen out by God to live in certain relations to the world, they ought to live the life of Jesus Christ. Hence arises for them the obligation of seeking the interests of Jesus Christ and not their own, the grace of God and not the vain grace of the world. They must fly from the corrupt influences of the world, and gather in greedily the goods of heaven so as to spread them among men with prompt and generous charity. Sometimes, of course, it is necessary to engage in worldly matters out of charity to others ; but they must never be deliberately sought after, lest they weigh down the spirit of him who loves them, and compel him by their weight to descend from heavenly things to the very lowest.

“ The ministers of God are the light of the world, and as such they ought to possess a profound learning, to enable them to teach men, to destroy error, and to lead many along the difficult ways of life. But to learning they should unite holiness of life, for men are reformed by example rather than by words. They should learn and know how to exercise over themselves an absolute control, according to those words of St. Bernard : ‘ You who are seeking to abandon everything, see that you remember to count yourself among the things to be abandoned. Above all else, renounce your-

self.' It is only thus that a priest can work successfully for the salvation of others, whilst at the same time assuring his own."

2. ON PEACE OF SOUL.

"I must convince myself that my first duty is to live in peace, and to fly from all preoccupation, interior trouble, impatience, indignation. All this does no good. Everything depends now on my distrust of myself and my absolute confidence in God. I must humble myself continually, be distrustful of myself, and repeat often the act of contrition.

"First foundation of interior peace: To be dead to the world, to creatures, to myself, and to all that is not God. The heart must be kept so free from earthly things as not to care for all that is not God or does not concern Him more than for a grain of sand. *Quod æternum non est nihil est.*

"Second foundation: To live in the spirit of perfect abandonment in the hands of Divine Providence. To regard all the events of each day, be they great or small, agreeable or disagreeable, as so many dispositions of this fatherly Providence, which wishes or permits things to be as they are; not to regard secondary causes, but to hold for certain that everything as it comes is for the best, and is most suitable both for the glory of God and our salvation.

"Third foundation: To love trials, both interior and exterior; to cherish abjection, contempt, and the being forsaken by creatures. The paradise of heaven consists in joy; the paradise of earth consists in suffering. If sorrows come, a loathing of sickness, contempt, and pain, turn at once to Jesus and Mary, whose close companions were contempt, sorrow, and extreme poverty.

"Fourth foundation: Not to undertake many things at once, however excellent, but only those entailed by our ministry and in accordance with obedience; above all, never to act in a hurry, with precipitation and impetuosity, but quietly and modestly. This modesty ought to shine in my words, gestures, and whole demeanour. *Fiat, adjuva me Domine.*"

3. ON HOPE.

"I feel a special need to fortify myself with the virtue of hope. Why so much feebleness, so little courage and con-

stancy in the service of God? It is the virtue of hope that is wanting. To save our souls we must persevere; but who will give us the grace of perseverance, or what are the means? Only God. We have nothing to expect from ourselves nor from others, and so should look for nothing, not even for temporal benefits; for woe to him who puts his trust in man. It is clear that we cannot expect heaven except only from God; but God alone suffices to give us all the means—sanctifying grace, remission of sins, spiritual light pointing out the way of salvation, holy affections of the will which give us strength to walk in that way, virtues, purity of conscience, supernatural gifts, exterior help urging us on to meritorious acts.

“We have special need to revive our hope in the midst of sadness and discouragement, when distrust and dejection take hold of us at the sight of our past sins and our actual faults, when we experience our feebleness and weakness, and our very slow progress in virtue.

“In prayer we must have confidence—*i.e.*, a strong and robust hope. Only from confidence ought we to expect graces.”

4. ON THE INTERIOR SPIRIT.

“The life of a Christian, and all the more so of a religious, ought to be a wholly spiritual one. A disciple, an imitator of Jesus Christ, should strive without ceasing to lead a supernatural life and to acquire the spirit of Christ. One cannot be a Christian without being an ‘interior man’—*i.e.*, living an interior life which is essential to Christianity. A Christian belongs to the earth only with regret and by necessity, and ought always to be ready to sacrifice everything for God, if the interests of God demand it. For this we must neither listen to, nor follow in anything, the movements of corrupt nature, but deliver ourselves wholly to the movements of grace, allowing ourselves to be governed by the Spirit of God, and to be guided throughout on supernatural principles. In virtue of our Baptism we no longer belong to ourselves, but without reserve to Jesus Christ, whose thoughts and sentiments we ought to adopt, as the standard for regulating our own conduct. If this is the case for every Christian—and no one can doubt it—what shall we say of the religious or of the priest?

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